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The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman – Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Testimony for Wednesday, June 1, 2016,  
*“Elevating Local Voices and Promoting Transparency for a Potential Monument Designation in Maine”*

Dear Chairman Bishop,

My name is Paul Sannicandro. I want to first give thanks for the opportunity to share my testimony with you and the Committee on Natural Resources, on an issue of profound importance to those that live in the Katahdin Region, in the great State of Maine.

I’m a Registered Maine Guide, who has called the Katahdin Region home for the last twenty years. During the majority of that time, I managed wilderness hiking trails as the Trail Supervisor of Baxter State Park. I’ve also been an advocate and volunteer, for diversifying the tourism economy of the region, by working with my local ATV & Snowmobile Club, in negotiating with private landowners, for securing, maintaining and developing ATV trail access for connectivity to Maine’s larger trail network. Most recently, I’ve launched a four-season guide business, catering to visitors of the Katahdin Region. I also hold a seat on the Millinocket Town Council. I am not here to testify on behalf of the constituents of Millinocket, for this controversy has been divisive in our town. I’m here to testify on my own behalf and for my interests in Recreational Tourism, Economic Development and securing my values, future and how I interpret this great State as, “Maine, The Way Life Should Be”.

As you may know, the controversy of the creation of a National Park in the North Maine Woods goes back to the 1930’s. It is not a new idea. From the political battles of former Governor Percival Baxter, sparring with his successor, Governor Owen Brewster, to the tug of war between the forest products industry and the environmental community, this debate has been ongoing. Through an evolution of both natural processes and human ingenuity, the North Maine Woods has forever been a renewable resource. It has seen the shift from hundreds of men with axes and cross-cut saws using horses, boats and waterways, into a mechanized harvesting operation, using million dollar machinery, a “crew” of three people, diesel tractor trailers and woods roads to transport logs for industry. All awhile, the rivers kept flowing and the forest continued to grow back.

The North Maine Woods has seen wood products' transportation shift away from our waterways, overland, to be hauled by trucks. Waterways were dammed, diverted, and in some cases the natural flows reversed. It's seen the Clean Water Act, and the private landowners' adaptation to transport raw materials by creating thousands of miles of logging roads. Roads that opened up new opportunities, creating a more convenient means for adventure and recreation for visitors to the North Maine Woods. All awhile, the rivers kept flowing, and the forest continued to grow back.

The North Maine Woods has witnessed, experienced and felt the pressures of natural processes, also. Major fires also changed the ecology of regions for generations. Spruce budworm infestations came and went, also. Most notably in recent history, the spruce budworm infestation of the late 1970's and early 1980's, resulted in larger scale clear cut operations. Industry leaders defended their decisions to the fact that salvaging the dead or dying standing timber, would prevent a predicted storm of cataclysmic wildfire that could jeopardize their operations for the long run. The salvage would prevent waste. The environmental community was appalled, and years later, forest practices were changed through referendum. All awhile, the rivers kept flowing, and the forest continued to grow back.

What happened to those clear cuts? Well, they grew back. Slowly.... Even aged stands of spruce and fir became the thickest cover, which became perfect habitat for snowshoe hare. This in turn became the perfect habitat, at the southern most end of its range, for the Canadian Lynx. More on that later..... And, all awhile, the rivers kept flowing, and the forest continued to grow back.

Yes, there is a common theme here. In Maine, we have two amazing renewable natural resources, water and forests. Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. (EPI), the organization that is willing to gift its land to the Dept. of Interior and has been championing the idea of the creation of the proposed National Monument and National Park, contracted a study with Headwaters Economics. In the study, there were 16 so called, "peer regions" that were used to discuss the economic benefits of National Parks, in their communities. There are sharp contrasts in the comparisons, such as the demographics, proximity to other industries and population centers, but most notably, the peer regions' former industries. Some of them were boom and bust communities from the mining industries out west. It doesn't make those communities insignificant. It's just not a good comparison when we're differentiating a non-renewable natural resource that is mined and a renewable resource that is harvested, such as trees. The paper industry may be gone, but there are other uses for wood fiber and wood products. So again, the rivers keep flowing and the forest continues to grow back.

Giving my brief overview of the history of the Maine Woods, it's also important to note that as a State, Maine has held the bar high when it comes to conservation, all awhile this federalization concept has been on the backburner. Let's not forget that former Governor Percival Baxter, who was vehemently opposed to Federal Government overreach in Maine, created the nearly 250,000 acre Baxter State Park, given to the State of Maine and its people, in trust. And, over time, for example, other NGO's such as The Forest Society of Maine have amassed holdings on 1.5 million acres, in conservation easements. These easements guarantee recreational access and the ability to continue harvesting trees, a renewable natural resource, for the wood products industry. The headwaters and waterways of five

major rivers located in the North Maine Woods have been protected from development through conservation easements or purchased in fee by the State of Maine, or by other conservation groups and land trusts, that have continued to allow for multiple uses.

In fact, another NGO, North Maine Woods, Inc., which is a consortium of private landowners within the working forest, assists with recreational management of nearly 3.5 million acres, providing roads, campsites and infrastructure for visitors to access and use for recreation. My point is that Maine, being the largest forested, contiguous tract of undeveloped forest land, east of the Mississippi River, already has secured a future for its forests and recreation through the benevolence of private landownership working in concert with conservation groups and industry, to strike a balance of multiple uses. And yes, there is also the dynamic of preservation groups holding these landowner's feet to the fire, to ensure that the scales are balanced.

Let's focus now on the purported values and reasons for the high level of environmental "protection" that the Department of Interior believes is needed, of the EPI lands in question. Of any feature, in or around the EPI parcels in question, it's the East Branch of the Penobscot River that has the highest value. The features of the river itself are unique. There is nothing else like it. Does it necessitate NPS regulations? Absolutely not! In fact, in 2014, members of the Maine Woods Discovery team paddled the East Branch, in commemorating Henry David Thoreau's river trip, 150 years before. During that experience they said that they felt the river had changed very little with respect to its wilderness character. What is not commonly known is the fact that the river corridor, itself, is already protected from development.

In 1981, the former Great Northern-Nekoosa paper company, gifted the East Branch of the Penobscot River's corridor to the State of Maine, which in turn conveyed it into a conservation easement, managed by Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands. It's listed as "PRC Upper West & East" on the BPL's Conservation Easement List. "PRC" represents Penobscot River Corridor. It's already protected and enjoyed annually by paddlers, people who fish, birdwatchers and others.

Recently, I had the amazing opportunity to paddle the East Branch, which was why I was unable to attend the meetings with NPS Director John Jarvis. This was my first chance to canoe the upper section starting at Matagamon. What I can relay from my experience is this... the East Branch of the Penobscot River Canoe trip is a wilderness journey, with or without a federal designation. It is not for the casual paddler, inexperienced, ill prepared or anyone over zealous of their own paddling prowess. It is wild! And... It did not take a federal agency to keep it that way, for it's as wild today as it was when our native peoples traveled it prior to this country's European influence. And, even though private landownership, whether it is owned by those with a preservation agenda or active forestry plans, abuts that corridor, it is off limits to development through that conservation easement, period. There is no need for National designation, it's already protected. We should leave it alone to be the wild place that it is, for the few souls that travel it.

There is also an 18 mile gravel “Loop Road” on the preserve property, west of the river. Currently, access to the loop road is possible through the traditional benevolence of private landowners, some of which may be impacted greatly, should this National Monument come to pass. The road winds around and through a predominantly early succession forest of pioneer species, such as white birch and aspen. There are some spectacular views... of Katahdin, the “Greatest Mountain”, the mountain of the People of Maine, which of course is the center piece of Baxter State Park.

Other features include, the pristine Wassataquoik Stream, which begins in Baxter State Park, and whose confluence with the East Branch, is already protected as a State of Maine Bureau of Park’s and Lands ecological preserve area, within the silver maple floodplain. There are also some smaller mountains and foothills, that have some hiking opportunities, and add to the landscape and charm of the East Branch River paddle. The International Appalachian Trail also traverses through EPI’s land holdings within the “proposed aquisitional boundaries”. These offerings are not insignificant. However, do they really behold the grandeur and allure of National Park distinction and designation?

National Park and Monument proponents continue to say that by virtue of EPI’s lands becoming a National Park Unit, that the branding, in itself, will bring 10% of Acadia NP’s visitors, northbound. In other words 300,000 visitors annually, would flock to an area that is less than half the size of Baxter State Park.

Let’s compare some statistics to refute the sustainability and scope of EPI’s 87,500 acre gift to the NPS. Baxter State Park is just over 210,000 acres. BSP has 8 drive-to campgrounds, 2 backcountry, hike-in only, campgrounds, approximately 60 miles of gravel roads to access campgrounds, 225 miles of hiking trails, 46 mountain peaks, 65 lakes and ponds and in 2013 had approximately 117,500 visitor days for the year. Baxter State Park’s visitor “carrying capacity” is governed by the finite designated campsites throughout the Park and the availability of limited parking capacity for day hikers within the Park’s campgrounds.

Presently, EPI’s proposal doesn’t include the planning for camping and recreational infrastructure. How is it possible that the Katahdin Region could absorb an additional 300,000 visitors, annually, when the land base of EPI’s ownership, in Northern Penobscot County, is less than half of Baxter State Park’s acreage? How will “flooding the gates” with that much traffic sustain visitor impacts and preserve the quality of the wilderness experience? It’s not possible when figuring the scale of the proposed National Monument or NP, is only a mere 87,500 acres, as promised.

It was only recently, in the last couple of months, that Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. began listing their proposed gift of lands in the Katahdin/East Branch Region, as a more accurate number of 87,500 acres. Up to that point, since the spring of 2015, EPI had promoted their gift as 150,000 acres. Looking at a map, created in 2015, of proposed “acquisitional boundaries”; it was easy to realize that much of the land base also included privately owned parcels within the proposed “acquisitional boundaries”.

Not only are there private lands that are within the proposed boundaries, but there are also public reserved lands and publically owned easements that were paid for with Maine bonds, such as the Land for Maine's Future program, and Federal subsidies, such as the Forest Legacy Program.

The focal point of EPI's marketing, for their Katahdin Woods and Waters brand, is Katahdin, Maine's highest mountain. The glossy mailings sent to locals, with slogans like, "Let's Continue the Conversation", show Katahdin. The rallying infomercial contains video clips of Katahdin and other mountains within Baxter State Park. Once visitors drive the 18 mile loop road once, and see the views of Katahdin, surely they will want to visit BSP. How is EPI being a "good neighbor" to Baxter State Park, when they're constantly showing images of Maine's crown jewel, Katahdin? It begs the question, "does the National Park Service have its eye on the most stunning geological feature in the North Maine Woods?" Is Baxter State Park part of a greater plan, to be consumed by Federal designation into the National Park System? Many would deny that. However, there is evidence that suggests just that.

You will find attached to this testimony, excerpts from the National Parks and Conservation Association's 1988 plan, titled: *National Park System Plan* that describes Baxter State Park and the surrounding lands as significant areas to be considered as a future NPS Unit. It's stated recommendation is to, "Initiate NPS study of alternative for the state park and surrounding lands; NPS monitoring of resource conditions; designation of national park around Baxter, inclusion of Baxter in the national park system when opportunity arises." The NPS Plan was produced under the direction of Destry Jarvis, who at the time served as the Director of the National Parks Program for the NPCA. He of course is the brother of the current NPS Director, John Jarvis, who recently visited the Katahdin Region and believes EPI's land holdings are worthy of National Monument designation.

With all of the focus on EPI's lands in the Katahdin/East Branch Region, it would be easy for the uninitiated to be distracted from the fact that EPI also owns over 60,000 acres in the Dover-Foxcroft/Katahdin Iron Works Region. By simply adding the total acreage from the two regions, the sum comes close to 150,000 acres. What is the relevance of this point? Each Region is host to a "Gateway" community that has been identified for over 25 years in the 3.2 million acre – "RESTORE: The North Maine Woods" proposed National Park model. The Town of Millinocket would be the south-easterly Gateway Community and the Town of Greenville would be the south-west Gateway Community.

Again, why would the Headwaters report include Northern Piscataquis County, when all of the public relations work and promotions for EPI's lands have been near Katahdin? Its inclusion was to garner the needed support from the neighboring economically depressed county, for the eventual addition of EPI's lands in Piscataquis County, to later be added to the NPS fold.

An irony of this debacle is the fact, out of the many private landowners that comprise the North Maine Woods, Elliotsville Plantation, Inc., is the only new major regional landowner who actually shut off recreational access, prior to working on its new positive public relations campaign, to gift their land holdings to the Dept. of the Interior.

In 2011, Ms. Roxanne Quimby made several visits to the Katahdin Region, sharing her plan and vision, with hopes that she could convince the local population to agree to a feasibility study. That feasibility study would have needed to be initiated by Maine's delegation to Washington, D.C., with their constituents' approval. The people of the Katahdin Region overwhelmingly said, no. That summer of 2011, Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar visited Millinocket to get a feel for the local sentiment towards a National Park. The feasibility study was dropped.

Over the years, the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, the Maine Professional Guides Association and the Maine Snowmobile Association have all been unified in sending the message, NO PARK! The Maine Legislature in 2011 drafted a proclamation where the majority of the legislature voted to denounce the creation of a National Park. Our current Governor of Maine, Paul LePage, is against the formation of a National Park. Most recently, the Town of Patten held a vote, with the resounding message, NO! The Town of Millinocket, twice, wrote resolves, denouncing the creation of a National Park. The Towns of East Millinocket and Medway both held straw poll votes for their residents, with both votes sending the message, NO NATIONAL PARK! And finally, at the state level, Maine passed legislation through, LD 1600, which once again showed that the majority of lawmakers within the Maine State government would retain their sovereignty as a State to not accept federal designation of a National Monument.

It brings us to the point where we are now. Without convincing numbers to support the concept and a lack of cooperation from the local residents, our delegation in Washington, D.C. would not move to support the development through legislation. But, by using the Antiquities Act, EPI has found a way around the local sentiments and has lobbied hard in Washington, D.C. with hopes that courting President Obama to use his authority will circumvent the will of the local residents.

All throughout the years of debate, never has there been a suggested compromise that would be amenable to the local voices. Somewhere, there is a hybrid model, which would allow the area to retain its identity, continue sustainable yield forestry for crafters and industry, incorporate trade skills, and identify trails and opportunities for all recreational user groups. My initial thought is something comparable to the State run model of the Adirondacks Park in upstate New York. But unfortunately the conversation seems to always be a YES or NO answer, with no discussion of a middle ground.

The allure of the Katahdin Region is a strong one that has fascinated many before me and will continue for generations to come. My hope is that the Katahdin Region will retain its rural feel, find creative ways to build sustainable economies that allow for true diversification and not become a gentrified play land for elitists.

I will leave you with these words from former Maine Governor Percival Proctor Baxter:

"Man is born to die. His works are short lived. Buildings crumble, monuments decay, wealth vanishes, but Katahdin in all its glory, forever shall remain the mountain of the people of Maine."