

Lucas St. Clair, President, Elliotsville Plantation Inc.
Testimony for House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee
Oversight Hearing on the Antiquities Act
5/2/2017

Good morning and thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Hanabusa for the invitation to testify before the House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee. I'm pleased to speak with the committee about an important conservation law, the Antiquities Act, that has preserved some of the most incredible natural wonders including the Grand Canyon and Death Valley National Parks, Native American sites like Mesa Verde, and sites where major historical events took place including Birmingham and Stonewall. We are fortunate that President Teddy Roosevelt had the foresight and wisdom to preserve a broad array of public lands where all Americans can access these places they own, be inspired, pray if they wish, learn and enjoy in perpetuity.

I'm a native Mainer, born and raised. From a young age, the woods were my playground where I climbed hills and mountains, fished in ponds and streams, learned to kayak and hunted woodcock and grouse. Today, I serve as President of Elliotsville Plantation Inc. (EPI), a private operating foundation whose mission is the acquisition and conservation of land and the preservation of open space for the benefit of the public and the conduct of educational and stewardship programs. Over two decades, EPI purchased forest land in northern Maine to further this conservation mission.

In 2011 when I became President of EPI, my focus was working with citizens in Maine to develop a proposal to turn our privately-owned land into a donation to the federal government for a national park unit. Our proposal was accepted by the federal government and last August, the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument was established by presidential proclamation. This monument includes key features that were essential to gain public support including hunting and snowmobiling on the east side of the East Branch of the Penobscot River. In addition, our foundation will donate \$20 million and raise another \$20 million toward an endowment to manage the monument. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts about our community-led effort to donate land for our fellow Americans to enjoy and importance of the Antiquities Act.

Let me provide some background on our state where roughly 92% of the land is in private ownership. To keep the size of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in perspective, its 87,500 acres is less than 0.4 percent of the land in Maine, and less than one percent of the largely undeveloped 10 million-acre area known as Maine's North Woods. While our donation is large enough to help preserve a piece of the North Woods for posterity, it barely registers compared to privately-held land in Maine.

Maine is known for thick, lush northern forests and an unrivaled coast teeming with lobsters. We are proud of these amazing natural resources that have shaped our history, our love for the

outdoors, and our economy. In the mid-19th century as timber harvesting grew so did the population in northern Maine. Land was sold to timber barons and the demand for paper and wood products grew at the turn of the century. Mills were built, logs were run down rivers including the Penobscot River, and the timber industry fed Maine's economy.

In my lifetime, I didn't witness the aforementioned heyday. Instead, I grew up in a small town called Dover-Foxcroft with a population of 4500 people and witnessed a different economic situation. I watched Millinocket, a nearby town where most working-aged men worked in either the paper mill or in the woods supplying the mill, start a slow decline. By 2008, the paper mill in Millinocket closed followed by more mill closures in the region.

Many of my friends moved out of northern Maine seeking jobs further south or elsewhere. Northern Maine is not thriving and the population continues to shrink. This incredible region that so many of us care about is struggling. Let me share with you a couple of sentences from a Bangor Daily News editorial (2015) endorsing a national park proposal for northern Maine:

Maine North Woods national park has been the subject of debate for more than two decades. In that time, the economic landscape of the Katahdin region has shifted dramatically — for the worse — and the ownership of much of the timberland stretching from Millinocket to the Canadian border has changed hands. A long tradition of mill jobs available to area residents right out of high school and open access to mill-owned land has gradually eroded, leaving an uncertain future...

The reality in the area is stark. Employment in the paper and forest products industries has dropped by more than half in the last two decades. In early 2015, about 5,500 people were employed by all of Maine's paper mills, according to the [Maine Department of Labor](#). That's about the number of people who worked in the Great Northern Paper Co. mills in Millinocket and East Millinocket alone in the GNP heyday. Mill operators have put the [future of more Maine mills](#) in doubt since the Department of Labor's last count, which is bound to further depress employment.

This is northern Maine's reality. Mills are closed and sold for scrap metal. Houses and commercial real estate sit on the market indefinitely. You don't need a degree in business or a certificate of election to know what has been happening to the economy in northern Maine. It's obvious.

My family began acquiring and conserving land in 2000. Timber companies approached us to buy their land near Baxter State Park in full view of the majestic Mt. Katahdin. The land includes three important waterways—the East Branch of the Penobscot River, Sebeois River, and Wassataquoik Stream. As many of you who share my passion for the outdoors can guess, these waterways have fantastic brook trout and smallmouth bass. The watersheds provide wildlife

habitat for lynx, bears, moose and bird species like gray jays, boreal chickadees and the American three-toed woodpecker.

The land tells the story of the Wabanaki people who migrated between the property my family donated and the coast to hunt and fish during the year. The land tells the story of the lumberjacks rolling logs down the rivers to the mills. The land tells the story of Teddy Roosevelt who in 1879 summited Katahdin after hiking nearly 40 miles from Island Falls, Maine. Roosevelt and his party crossed the East Branch of the Penobscot River and Wassataquoik Stream in an experience that sparked a life-long commitment to conservation.

My family cares deeply about conservation and felt the best way to preserve the outdoors, tell the stories of the people of northern Maine, and help the economy was to donate our land to the National Park Service.

Starting in 2011, I met with neighbors, business owners, politicians, hotel owners, timber industry executives, snowmobilers, anglers, hikers, skiers, river guides, teachers, mill workers and many other Mainers who care about the future of our local communities and state. I joke about the amount of coffee I drank over 5 years – more than I care to admit. I sat in many living rooms and heard in great detail what folks wanted if a national park were going to be established in northern Maine. I took every conversation to heart and designed a proposed park that responded to what I heard.

Access to hunting, snowmobiling, skiing, and hiking were on the top of the list. Amenities and expectations for the property were very important – more toilets, campgrounds, improved roads and bridges. Essentially, we needed a national park unit with opportunities for sightseeing, hiking, river running, mountain biking and cross country skiing, and also for hunting and snowmobiling. It was essential to include hunting and snowmobiling – two activities that cannot always be counted on from year to year on private land. We needed to ensure that the opportunity for these uses would be guaranteed and supported in this park unit. We consulted with national park experts to determine whether this homegrown conception could become a reality, and developed a national park proposal that provided a range of activities across the landscape from Baxter State Park to the gateway communities.

The national park proposal gained support from important regional business and civic groups including the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Katahdin Rotary Club, the Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce, the Bangor City Council and the Maine Innkeepers Association. More than 200 Maine businesses in the Katahdin, Houlton, Presque Isle, Bangor and Acadia regions—endorsed the park proposal.

In April 2015, a Critical Insights poll showed that 67% of residents of Maine's 2nd Congressional district (northern, western and eastern Maine) supported the proposed national park unit. In November 2015, advocates delivered more than 13,000 signatures in support of the proposed park unit from residents of 371 Maine towns and 50 states to Maine's congressional delegation.

After the proposal gained momentum in northern Maine, we began exploring a national monument designation. Senator Angus King invited the National Park Service Director to meet with and answer questions for folks in the region. There were several meetings and some impromptu gatherings. The culmination was a well-publicized public meeting in Orono, Maine with over 1400 Mainers from all over the state, where the vast majority supported our proposal for a national monument managed by the National Park Service. In a state where the population of 60% of our towns is less than 2000 residents—this was an impressive turnout. In addition, of the roughly 400 handwritten comments collected at the meeting, approximately 95% supported a national monument.

I can't overemphasize the amount of transparency and community engagement that preceded the establishment of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. I made many trips to Washington, DC and met with some of you and your colleagues over the years. I met with our delegation in Maine. Based on the strong support demonstrated for our proposal, we offered to donate our properties along the East Branch of the Penobscot River to the National Park Service. The National Park Service indicated that the properties fully met its criteria for units of the National Park System. Once the donation was complete and the title transfers occurred, the land was declared Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument by the president under his authority in the Antiquities Act.

Do all 87,000 acres meet the criteria under the law? As the proclamation establishing the monument demonstrates, this very special natural and cultural landscape meets these criteria without question.

The objects of historic and scientific interest occur throughout the landscape, in all the 13 deeded parcels we donated. They include remarkable geology, undeveloped watersheds and stunning hydrological features, significant biodiversity and connectivity for plants and animals, and extraordinary opportunities to observe and study all this natural wonder. The objects also include the history of human activity in this landscape, include its significance to the Wabanaki people, loggers and timber companies, recreationists including hunters, anglers, and hikers, artists including John James Audubon and Frederic Edwin Church, and historic figures including Henry David Thoreau and Theodore Roosevelt whose lives were changed by these North Woods. All the land included in the national monument encompasses, and is essential to the proper care and management of, these objects.

Whether it's the wild rivers, critical wildlife habitat, historical significance, awe-inspiring scenery, or night skies and northern lights-- the area is a natural and cultural wonder that Americans should visit and embrace much like Acadia National Park on Maine's coast. Like Katahdin Woods and Waters, Acadia started as a national monument proclaimed by President Wilson after private land had been donated for it. Without the Antiquities Act, neither of these places that are quintessentially Maine would have had a fighting chance to be preserved for all Americans.

I have heard the notion that the Antiquities Act should only be used in the face of an imminent threat. While nothing in the Act so states, the Act is a very important tool when there is some urgency for protection. So was there urgency to protect Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument? Yes, there were lands that were up for sale, and there is economic urgency. Our community needs investment and quickly. My family chose to focus on a national monument as a way to diversify the economy while saving some of the region's defining characteristics. We hope other philanthropists, business owners and real estate investors follow our lead in promoting the regional economy. We have reason to hope this could happen. Last summer, federal Commerce Department experts came to the region to provide support. A recent news report from centralmaine.com describes this effort:

The team, requested by U.S. Senators Angus King and Susan Collins, is a rare instance of the federal government marshaling federal resources to assist a region experiencing economic distress. Modeled after the national Disaster Recovery Framework, it has been deployed 30 times nationwide in its 40-year history, including to address the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the collapse of New England's fisheries.

It also comes with [\\$7.7 million in federal money](#) to invest in the forest products industry and to support and track the results of the team's visit to Maine.

The state's congressional delegation is part of the team, but no state government officials are. The Maine planning committee is made up of representatives from the private sector.

Much planning and research went into the three-day tour that concluded Friday, according to officials, who said the involvement of federal agencies and their work did not end this week, but rather will continue for the next three years with the development of an "action plan" and specific goals for the industry.

Collins, King and U.S. Rep. Bruce Poliquin, in a joint statement Friday, thanked the commerce department and members of the team for their efforts over the last three days and said their work is "an important first step and the beginning of a longer-term process among industry, local stakeholders, and federal agencies that can revitalize this critical pillar of our economy."

The statement did not mention the response from state government.

We hope the engagement with the Commerce Department expands and grows. We hope the state government participates. It is critically important for the region to get federal assistance to design strategies to grow our forest products industries and we believe those efforts are entirely compatible with the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

In other hopeful news, since the designation of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, the towns around Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument are witnessing economic improvement. Real estate sales have picked up, multi-season visitation is increasing and business investments are happening. A foundation is making a \$5 million investment to build an outdoor education facility just south of the national monument. EPI continues to work with the National Park Service to make infrastructure improvements to the monument as well as raise money toward our commitment of a \$40 million endowment for the monument.

National monuments are one component of the communities which they are a part. Some provide recreation opportunities, some protect sacred sites, some preserve the stories of our past, and some protect our natural resources for the future. They can support tourism or new residents to an area. In our case, I hope the monument attracts a variety of industries so some of my old friends are able to find jobs and move back to the region to raise their families. These communities need diversified economies. The days of one industry dominating an area are long gone.

There was great wisdom in designing a law to allow a president to preserve our heritage for future generations. It has been working for over a 100 years and there are more than 150 places that prove the success of this law. I'm grateful that Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is a shining example. No adjustment is necessary.