



Hon. Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
US House Committee on Natural Resources

Hon. Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
US House Committee on Natural Resources

Dear Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and the Committee on Natural Resources:

We write to you today to share important information about Maine's new Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and the positive impact that its creation has had our community.

As you know, President Obama designated about 87,000 acres of land in Maine as a national monument in August 2016. The land was a gift to the National Park Service from a private landowner. In addition to the gift of land, the landowner – Elliotsville Plantation Inc., a nonprofit foundation – is donating a \$20 million endowment and has pledged to raise an additional \$20 million to support the national monument.

In addition to the endowment, there are several other important attributes to the new national monument, which make it a model for multi-use federal lands. The monument permanently protects access for traditional recreation activities, including snowmobiling and hunting, which are important in Maine from both an economic and cultural standpoint.

Last fall, following designation of the national monument, visitation in the region noticeable increased, with a number of businesses indicating it was their best fall ever.

All winter, snowmobilers, cross-country skiers and snowshoers have been able to enjoy access to the monument's lands, and we're looking forward to a strong visitor season this summer.

The monument is clearly worthy of its status given its cultural, historic and environmental significance.

But perhaps as important, the monument has provided a much needed economic boost to the Katahdin region in Maine. Our communities have suffered significant economic upheaval with the closure of several large mills, which used to be the economic foundation of our towns.

For the first time in decades, property values are rising, new businesses are opening and new investments are being made. In fact, the creation of the national monument led directly to the public announcement of the development of a \$5 million outdoor recreation center nearby. Jobs are being created, and there's new hope and new energy in an area desperate for both.

Maine has long been known as Vacationland, but tourists rarely ventured from our state's beautiful coast into the interior. That's starting to change.

CNN included Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument fifth on its list of places in the world to visit in 2017. National TV shows, travel magazines and newspapers have covered the monument, sparking new interest in an amazing and beautiful part of our state.

We simply cannot afford to go backwards.

We understand that there are members of Congress who are concerned about the application of the Antiquities Act and the process used to create this national monument.

But we would like to clear up some misinformation about Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

The monument has the support of the Maine people, who turned out in force for a public hearing with US Sen. Angus King and former National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis. Polling in the state has consistently shown strong support for the monument; a poll in October, 2016, two months after the monument was created found 72% in Maine, with only 22% opposition and 6% undecided. Former opponents have already publicly recognized the opportunity the monument creates for our communities and stated their interest in moving forward to take advantage of those opportunities.

In the past, opponents of the park have told wild tales of the terrible impact a national monument designation would have on our region. None of those horror stories have come true. Snowmobiling is forever allowed on the monument. So is hunting.

The monument also has not hurt the forest products industry, and there remains an ongoing effort to redevelop the site of former mills in Millinocket, East Millinocket and Lincoln. Recently, five separate forest products related companies expressed interest in moving to the former mill site that is currently being cleaned up and prepared for future investment.

There are new community efforts to revitalize our towns, built from the opportunities around the monument, and a new sense of community pride built with an eye toward the future, not the past.

Many of the few remaining critics of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument – including Gov. Paul LePage – have never visited the land or spoken with business owners who are seeing the positive impact that it's already having.

As business leaders in our communities, we hope that you will take a broader view of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, one not rooted in ideology but instead in practicality.

We support our national monument. It is already living up to the promises of creating jobs and protecting traditional activities. People are visiting, are spending money in local businesses and some are deciding that the Katahdin region is where they want to live, work and raise their families.

Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is a model designation that shows how public input can strengthen public lands through the incorporation of new and novel ideas.

The American people have been given an amazing gift with Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. And our communities have been given a chance for renewal.

We hope that you will consider our direct experiences when you discuss Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Gail Fanjoy, President  
Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Senator Susan Collins  
Senator Angus King  
Representative Chellie Pingree  
Representative Bruce Poliquin  
Secretary Ryan Zinke