

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 20, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We understand that you are considering using your executive power under the Antiquities Act to designate unilaterally as a national monument more than 100,000 acres of what is currently privately owned land in northern Maine and write to express our serious reservations and significant concerns about such a proposal.

The private land owner, Elliotsville Plantation Inc. (EPI), has made clear that it would like to donate its land in the Katahdin Region to the federal government for the purpose of establishing a national park and national recreation area, which would require an act of Congress. The president of EPI's board, Mr. Lucas St. Clair, has recently informed us that he is in discussions with the Department of Interior to bypass Congress to seek a national monument designation. This concerns us because residents in the Katahdin Region have the most to gain or lose from federal land encroaching on their doorstep, and it is clear that deep divisions remain.

While we acknowledge the right of private land owners to donate their land, we have serious concerns about the executive branch using its power to unilaterally designate a national monument in our state. Mainers have a long and proud history of private land ownership, independence, and local control, and do not take lightly any forced action by the federal government to increase its footprint in our state. Recognizing that despite these concerns, you nevertheless may use your legal authority to bypass the normal legislative process and designate a national monument in Maine, we believe that you should be aware of the history of this proposal and the conditions that we strongly believe must be included if such a designation moves forward.

For many years, EPI has been working to build local support to establish a national park and national recreation area on its land. As Members of Maine's Congressional Delegation, it is incumbent upon us to research thoroughly such a controversial issue. We have devoted countless hours to meet with stakeholders, including local business owners, forest product industry officials, snowmobile clubs, hunting groups, outdoor recreation organizations, environmental groups, local land owners, and land preservation trusts. We have responded to hundreds of emails, letters, and phone calls from local area residents. Our offices have toured the property in question and have attended local town hall meetings devoted to discussing publicly the proposal. We believe we have thoughtfully considered all points of view and have carefully listened to all sides of this issue.

Proponents and opponents alike target more jobs for the struggling Katahdin Region as the basis for their conclusions. Some residents believe that one way to stimulate the regional economy,

decimated by the closure of paper mills in the area, would be for the federal government to create a national park and national recreation area to boost tourism and outdoor recreation jobs. Local chambers of commerce support this opportunity and cite economic studies which point to job creation around other national parks across the country. In a recent poll, the idea of a national park was supported by roughly 60 percent of Mainers.

Other residents believe that any form of federal ownership could jeopardize jobs and future job creation in the prized Katahdin Region's working forests. In two non-binding referendums this past summer, more than 70 percent of the residents living in two of the most affected communities voted in opposition to creating a national park on this land. In addition, 225 Maine businesses that employ more than 5,000 hard-working Mainers, many in the logging, trucking, saw mill, and other forest products industries, announced their opposition to the proposal, largely because they believe that federal ownership would hurt their businesses and prevent future investment and job creation.

The federal government is also struggling to meet its current obligations to fund our 408 existing national park units, with a current maintenance backlog of \$11.5 billion. Adding more than 100,000 acres to the federal land system would only add to that burden.

We cannot underscore enough the importance of bringing new economic development to this severely economically depressed region of Maine. A national monument designation, however, would likely antagonize already divided local communities. The future of EPI's property is just one part of a greater need to improve economic opportunity in the Katahdin Region. To that end, we request the full assistance of the federal government to identify and secure funding for economic development activities through the Economic Development Assistance Program and other manufacturing programs that could help the forest products industry and other entrepreneurs in the area. Specifically, we seek financial support for research to back the development and use of wood products and fibers, advanced engineering projects that use wood, and support for policies that will create strong markets for wood products. Our many discussions with local residents and businesses have deepened our understanding of the viewpoints and needs of the Katahdin Region.

Despite our reservations, if you nevertheless choose to use your executive power under the Antiquities Act to accept the EPI land donation and to designate a new national monument, we strongly urge that you incorporate the following conditions:

1. Express permission for all traditional recreation uses, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, the use of motorized vehicles, such as snowmobiles and ATVs, and other outdoor recreational activities associated with our North Maine Woods. Maine has a long and cherished history of public access to large tracts of privately owned land. This invaluable relationship must be protected so that citizens are able to continue to recreate freely and responsibly.
2. Protection for the long term well-being of our prized forests, both within the borders of any federal land designation and for the adjacent and surrounding areas. Any federal land must allow for proper forest management, including timber harvesting, to prevent

forest fires and invasive species and to allow for proper sustainable tree growth. Moreover, the surrounding lands have robust forestry activities such as logging, trucking, and timber harvesting, and any federal land designation must not impair these industries, their good paying jobs or inhibit future growth in this sector. The forest products industry employs nearly 40,000 hard-working Mainers. One out of every 20 jobs in Maine is associated with the forest products sector.

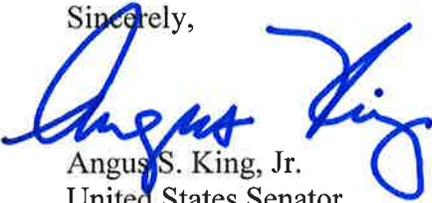
3. All private or state land that is contiguous, adjacent, or nearby, or any inholdings, must continue to have established easements and rights of way, including for roads, and remain independent of any federal control. This independence must also include freedom from view shed, air quality, or buffer zone regulations or requirements. No federal regulations should be put in place that would discourage future investment or growth in the region.
4. Any monument designation must respect private property rights and ensure that the federal government will never take any private land in the area by eminent domain. All land must be acquired from a willing seller through donation or purchase. Concerns have been raised about the size of the parcel in question, as for some time many believed that EPI owned 150,000 acres of the proposed national park and national recreation area. In fact, more than 40 percent of the proposed area is owned by other private landowners, some of whom have adamantly expressed they have no interest in selling their land for inclusion in any federal land system.
5. Management needs of the area must be carefully examined to determine the appropriate federal land management agency. The U.S. Forest Service, with its history of working closely with communities to preserve traditional uses, should be considered as an agency to oversee any national monument designation.
6. Establishment of a local and state advisory board to ensure that any management decisions reflect local and state priorities, not the priorities of Washington. Local communities know how to make their own decisions and that autonomy should continue.
7. Federal commitment to help improve the economically depressed Katahdin Region and create new jobs must accompany any new federal land designation. This should include efforts related to tourism and outdoor recreation, as well as the forest products industry.
8. When creating the educational and interpretive experience for any public land in question, it is critical to have a special emphasis on the Katahdin Region's rich history, including the important roles of the timber industry, local communities, and the Penobscot Nation.
9. Preference for Maine businesses and products in creating and servicing any federally designated public lands. For example, Maine timber should be used to construct buildings, and Maine concessioners should be hired to provide services and products inside the boundaries of any national monument. Neighbors to federal lands are more likely to support federal initiatives when Washington employs their direct support.

In closing, while we respect the right of EPI to donate its private property to the federal government, we cannot ignore the serious reservations of our constituents. We urge you to carefully weigh the views of those who live in the region, as well as the criteria we have outlined in this letter. The last thing the Katahdin Region needs is burdensome and restrictive federal regulations that discourage future investment and badly needed jobs while changing the traditional Maine way of life.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress