

October 22, 2009

Dear Senators Collins and Snowe, Representatives Michaud and Pingree,

Subject: Low level jet flights are an incompatible use of Maine's High Peaks.

Quality of place, identified by the Brookings Institute as Maine's chief competitive advantage, in the national and global economy is threatened by Massachusetts's Air National guard's attempt to drop the flight ceiling from 7000 feet to 500 feet.

There is a lot of collaborative large landscape conservation effort going on in this area and in addition, connections linking communities by back country trails could help build a world class nature tourism destination.

The Rangeley High Peaks Forest Legacy Application is an example of this area's importance to the state and nation. Land conservation is a form of economic development protecting Maine's Brand. Let's not destroy it before it has a chance to get started.

F15's flying at 500 feet will prevent this from happening which is a cost to be born by the people of Western Maine who can ill afford it.

The Ecological Study of the High Peaks Region of Maine's Western Mountains, by conservation biologist, Pete Mc Kinley PHD has been given to the Air National Guard and it's import needs to be well understood. This is true for the Brookings Institute and Fermata Study of western Maine.

On top of the environmental impact (to flora and fauna) is the economic impact which when properly quantified will demonstrate that low level jet flights are unsafe and economically toxic to our world class area which could be every bit as good as New Zealand for nature based tourism.

Sincerely,
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Director of High Peaks Alliance, Sandy River Land Trust,
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust.