

State of Maine, Department of Environmental Protection and Land Use Regulatory
Commission

**CENTRAL MAINE POWER COMPANY
NEW ENGLAND CLEAN ENERGY CONNECT**

Application for Site Location of Development Act permit, and Natural Resources Protection Act permit for the New England Clean Energy Connect ("NECEC") Project in 25 municipalities, 13 Townships or Plantations and 7 Counties from Beattie Township to Lewiston and Wiscasset to Windsor.

L-27625-26-A-N
L-27625-TB-B-N
L-27625-2C-C-N
L-27625-VP-D-N
L-27625-IW-E-N

Pre-filed Testimony of Todd Towle,
Kingfisher River Guides
Kingfield, ME
P
Witness for Trout Unlimited

Qualifications and Purpose of Testimony

1. State your name, address and current occupation:

Todd Towle Registered Maine Guide, Photographer and Millwright.
P.O. Box 442, Kingfield, ME 04947.

2. What is your personal background?

I was born in Maine and my family has lived in Somerset County for four generations. I grew up in Smithfield and since 1999 have lived in Kingfield, ME. My family on my wife's side has worked in the area in the timber business since 1947. My family owns property on Coburn Mountain and a family owned camp on Grace Pond. I have been fishing, hunting, hiking, climbing, and rafting in Somerset County for more than 30 years. I particularly enjoy fishing in remote areas, far from roads or other signs of human disturbance. Cold Stream and the Kennebec River in the Kennebec Gorge are favorite streams for me to fish.

3. What is your professional experience?

I worked as a full-time whitewater river guide licensed on the Kennebec, Dead, and West Branch Penobscot Rivers for six seasons, and as a climbing and backcountry ski guide for three seasons throughout New England and the intermountain west. I have worked in the Forks region for

more than two decades. Since 2000 I have worked as a full-time fishing guide in the region from Jackman to the Forks to Madison. I guide on the Kennebec River, Dead River, and numerous small tributaries to the Kennebec and Dead. I also work as a professional photographer. In these jobs and in my personal recreation I have spent time on most streams in Somerset County.

4. Have you previously testified before the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or the Maine Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC)?

No.

5. Are you familiar with the application for the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC)?

I have reviewed the Google Earth Map of the proposed “Greenfield Route” from Beattie Township to Moxie Gore and have considered how the construction of the NECEC will affect places I know well.

6. What is the purpose of your testimony?

My testimony focuses on my intimate knowledge of the landscape and fisheries resources that will be impacted by the “greenfield” section of the NECEC from Beattie Township to Moxie Gore. It addresses existing uses of the region where the NECEC is proposed to be constructed, particularly angling, including my personal use, use by friends and family members, and use by clients I guide in the region; the impact the proposed project will have on the remote experience that is important to me, other users, and my clients; and on how the presence of new man-made corridor and its associated structures will affect users of the affected area.

7. Are you familiar with recreational uses of the region through which the NECEC will pass?

I have been recreating in Somerset County all my life. My family owns two properties located within two miles of the NECEC right-of-way. My entire professional life—more than 20 years—has been spent guiding clients who choose to come to this region for recreation. I am intimately familiar with the region and how I, my family and friends, and my clients use it.

8. How many clients have you guided in this region?

I have guided an estimated 500 fishing clients over the past 20 years. I have also fished with dozens of friends and acquaintances. I am very familiar with what anglers are looking for when they come to this region.

Unique Character of the Region for Recreation

9. What is special about this region for recreation?

This region offers three things that make it different from other places people travel to fish.

First, there is abundant habitat for wild, native trout. This is rare. Even in other parts of the country famous for trout fishing, many of the trout are either stocked regularly, or are the wild offspring of non-native species that were introduced here generations ago. I've fished extensively in the Rocky Mountain west, and most of the famous trout rivers there are filled with brown trout that are native to Europe or brook trout that are native to the east or rainbow trout that are native to watersheds farther west. Here in Somerset County, and especially in the region that will be crossed by the Greenfield section of the NECEC, almost all the streams, rivers and remote ponds still have wild brook trout. Anglers like me prefer that. My business caters to clients who want that experience.

Second, the fish resource is diverse. We can chase brook trout in streams that range from tiny trickles to large rivers with Class IV whitewater. We can chase brook trout in ponds that range from 1-acre beaver flowages to 75,000-acre Moosehead Lake. And we do have some waters where non-native species, primarily landlocked salmon and rainbow trout, offer excellent fisheries for those who want some species diversity.

Third, it's remote. From the Forks, Route 201 heads northwest to the Canadian border, and there is not another paved road between Route 201 and the border. It is not untouched wilderness, because it's been logged many times, but it is part of the largest piece of uninterrupted forest land east of the Rockies. Once you leave Route 201, you see very few buildings. You see no lights at night. Other than logging roads and logging equipment, there are no signs of development. It's easy to spend a day in the woods or on the water and not see anyone else all day. It's the wildest place you can go in the east, and in some ways it's wilder than much of the Rocky Mountain west.

The combination of excellent native trout habitat and diverse fishing opportunities in a region that is almost completely undeveloped outside the Route 201 corridor is unique.

10. Are you familiar with what people are looking for when they come here to fish?
Every angler is different. Some only care about the number or the size of fish they catch. But many of the people I fish with and guide want a remote experience. The fish are important, but so is getting to a place that is different from what they are used to and feels wild. Some anglers are looking for a removed-from-normal trip. Small stream clients especially appreciate the work to get to these places and the wild brook trout—no matter the size—are the prize. The feeling of remoteness and away from other people is important.

Concerns About Impacts on Wild Brook Trout Fisheries

11. How important is the presence of wild brook trout to you, the people you fish with, and your clients?
It's essential. People can fish anywhere for stocked trout. What's special here is the wild brook trout. That's the draw that brings someone to fish here instead of someplace else.

12. Are you concerned about habitat impacts?

My own fishing and my guiding business both depend on high quality habitat to produce wild brook trout. Without cold water and good habitat, the brook trout and my business both die. Spending every day on the water, I see the day to day and year to year variability in brook trout populations. Streams with intact canopy cover and clean water are important. This is where I see juvenile trout come from, and these are the streams that provide cold water where I can still find trout in late summer. Spawning habitat and coldwater water refuge habitat are essential. Without them, we can lose an entire watershed as a trout fishery. I see the variation between high water years (good for trout survival and reproduction) and low water years (bad). I don't want to see those cycles get worse. I have already seen these kinds of impacts on Spencer Stream—another Dead River tributary important for spawning since the construction of the Kibby Wind Project. I am afraid I'll see the same impacts with this project.

13. Are there places you are particularly worried about the habitat impacts of the NECEC Project?

All the stream crossings concern me, but I'm especially worried about the long section where the NECEC parallels the lower end of Cold Stream. The construction here is immediately adjacent to the Wilson Hill Road and at the top of a steep slope that runs directly into Tomhegan Stream and Cold Stream at the bottom of the slope. Sediment from construction, included associated access roads, could harm habitat in the stream at the bottom of the slope.

Impacts of the NECEC on Recreational Experience

14. Do you avoid areas where existing development (dams, powerlines, roads, buildings) is visible in your fishing and guiding?

It depends on what I and the people with me are looking for, but for myself and with some clients, yes. Bushwhacking into a remote place to find trout is special. It would feel different if we could see something large and industrial.

15. How would construction of the NECEC affect your recreational experience?

I am frequently looking to get away from the crowd and away from signs of development. I would actively avoid fishing in places where the NECEC is nearby or visible. Seeing a large, manmade structure changes the experience. Even if the fish are still there, it won't feel the same.

16. Do you anticipate changing areas you choose to fish and guide if the NECEC is constructed?

I'll deliberately avoid areas where the NECEC structures or right of way are visible. It's

a large visual impact. The NECEC line has essentially the same footprint as the Maine Turnpike—150 feet wide. That’s 3 times the footprint of the Route 201 corridor, which I already avoid.

17. Can you describe particular places that are important to your fishing where you think NECEC will change the character of the areas and therefore your use or use by other people?

There are several places where I have specific concerns.

1. Cold Stream, including its tributaries, is a very important resource for me. It has cold water, so it holds trout all summer. It’s a spawning tributary to the mainstem Kennebec River, so it supports large adult fish during times of the year when fishing is tough elsewhere. It’s a—you have to want to get there, but when you do, you’ve gotten someplace worth getting—stream. I fish and guide there a lot. I’m worried about the number of crossings—on Cold Stream, and on Tomhegan Stream where we know some Kennebec River brook trout go to spawn. Cold Stream is especially remote, difficult to access, and has excellent fishing in the 3.5 miles from the mouth of Tomhegan Stream to the Kennebec. The NECEC line will parallel the stream about ½ mile away along this entire stretch. It gets even closer near the confluence with the Kennebec.

This raises two concerns. The first is the logging road I use to access spots from which I and my clients bushwhack down to Cold Stream. This access currently involves about seven miles of gravel logging road from we leave pavement—2+ miles along the Capital Road, then 4.3 miles down a rough road from the Capital Road through the woods to the crossing of Tomhegan Stream, and then further to reach points where I leave the road to bushwhack to Cold Stream. Along this route today, the only sign of human activity other than logging operations is the existing powerline crossing about one mile south of the Capital Road.

In the future, the NECEC Route will be visible and directly adjacent to more than 1 mile of this route where the NECEC parallels the Capital Road. It will again be visible—within 500 feet or less of my route—from the Tomhegan Stream crossing for the next 2 miles, with the centerline of the corridor as close as 160 feet from the road. This will fundamentally change the experience. Today, it’s a long drive into the woods, parking in a remote spot miles from the last man-made structure, and then a bushwhack down to the stream. In the future, two long stretches of what today is a “long drive into the woods”—more than 3 miles of a 7-mile drive on logging roads—will be in the shadow of the NECEC structures and within view of the cleared corridor. (Exhibit 1)

2. Gold Brook, near Rock Pond, is also important. This whole area is special, with Gold Brook collecting the outlets from Rock Pond and Iron Pond, then flowing downstream into Baker Pond. Rock, Iron and Baker Ponds are all designated State Heritage Fish Waters for brook trout. Gold Brook is an excellent trout stream. The NECEC crosses Gold Brook, parallels it closely for about a half mile, then crosses it

again and then passes along the north shore of Rock Pond, less than 1,000 feet from the shore of the pond. I believe line here will be visible from multiple places I fish, including from Rock Pond, from Iron Pond, and at multiple places along Gold Brook. This is an excellent area for late summer fishing due to its high altitude (~1600 feet) and therefore cold water. It will become a much less attractive place to fish, and I am also concerned about the multiple crossings in their area. In addition to two crossings of Gold Brook, the NECEC also crosses the inlet to Rock Pond and multiple small tributaries to Gold Brook. (Exhibit 2)

3. Horse Brook, a tributary to the Moose River. My family has owned a camp on Grace Pond for years. Grace Pond is an excellent trout pond, also a State Heritage Fish Water for brook trout. It's outlet, Horse Brook, flows through a steep gorge, then crosses the Spencer Road. The NECEC crossing is about 1000 feet downstream of where Horse Brook crosses the Spencer Road. The NECEC also crosses another permanent stream that is a tributary to Horse Brook, entering just above where Horse Brook flows into the Moose River. From years of fishing around the Grace Pond area, I know that Horse Brook is a coldwater tributary to the Moose River, which warms in the summer. This coldwater refuge is important for Moose River brook trout and provides a reliable summer fishery. I am concerns about both habitat impacts, especially on water temperature, from the crossings, and about the changed experience of fishing Horse Brook with the NECEC lines visible. (Exhibit 3)

4. Salmon Stream, a tributary to the Dead River. Salmon Stream is an important coldwater tributary to the Dead River. It drains from the high elevations of Johnson Mountain, where multiple small tributary streams flow into the headwater of Salmon Stream and the East Branch of Salmon Stream. This cold water is sustained all the way down to the Dead River, where the mouth of Salmon Stream is an important cold water refuge in mid-summer. Brook trout from the Kennebec and Dead Rivers swim into Salmon Stream to spawn, and the cold water is also critical for juvenile production. As the NECEC line runs across the south side of Johnson Mountain, it will create new cleared crossing across multiple headwater tributaries of Salmon Stream and East Branch Salmon Stream. (Exhibit 4)

5. Austin Stream Tributaries near Bingham. The Kennebec River in Bingham offers a unique Maine fishery for wild rainbow trout, some of them of trophy size. It is the only such fishery in the state. This area is less remote than the new section of the NECEC from Beattie Township to Moxie Gore. It's closer to home for me, and shorter trip for me to meet friends or clients. My concern is that most of the rainbow trout spawning occurs in the spring in Austin Stream and its tributaries. The NECEC will run parallel to an existing powerline that already crosses two important spawning tributaries to Austin Stream—Mink Brook and Chase Stream. The new clear right of way will

essentially double the impact of the existing powerline crossing. I'm concerned about the impacts on rainbow trout spawning in these critical tributaries. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has long kept these streams closed to fishing during the spring rainbow trout spawning season because they are so important to maintaining the fishery. (Exhibit 5)

15. Do you anticipate these changes will impact use by people like you and the clients you guide in these areas?

I believe the combination of visual impacts, a different experience in accessing these areas (for example, crossing under or along the new NECEC line while accessing these areas, seeing the NECEC structures from the water, or having it cross overhead at places I fish today) and the potential for habitat and water temperature impacts of multiple crossings in some watersheds will degrade the recreational experience.

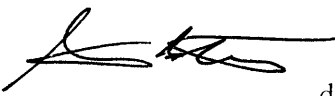
16. Are you concerned about increased ease of access to some of these areas?

I am concerned that trails that provide increased access, especially by ATV, will follow the corridor and make access to places that are now quite remote and accessible only by bushwhacking much more accessible. Specific examples that I am familiar with include Beattie Pond, an LUPC-designated Remote Pond, where the NECEC ROW will be about ¼ mile from water's edge (Exhibit 6); and Horse Brook, an important tributary providing cold water to the Moose River, where the NECEC ROW would provide an additional access to the brook at a crossing closer to the Moose River than the existing Spencer Road bridge. (Exhibit 3)

List of Exhibits

1. Exhibit 1, Map of NECEC Route along lower Cold Stream.
2. Exhibit 2, Map of NECEC Route near Gold Brook and Rock Pond.
3. Exhibit 3, Map of NECEC Route near Horse Brook and Moose River.
4. Exhibit 4, Map of NECEC Route near Salmon Stream headwaters.
5. Exhibit 5, Map of NECEC Route near Austin Stream tributaries where rainbow trout spawn.
6. Exhibit 6, Map of NECEC Route near Beattie Pond.

Notarization

I, , being first
duly sworn, affirm that
the above testimony is
true and


accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Date: 2/26/19

Name Todd Towle
Title Owner of Kingfisher River Guides

Personally appeared the above-named Todd Towle and made affirmation that the
above testimony is true and accurate to the best
of her knowledge.

Date: 2/26/2019

Notary 



Todd Towle Testimony Exhibits:
Map of NECEC Route Displayed on Google Earth

**Maps Prepared by Jeff Reardon, Trout Unlimited
Using Google Earth**

Data Sources:

- NECEC Route KMZ File (Jan, 2019) from Maine DEP at <https://www.maine.gov/dep/gis/datamaps/>
- USGS Topo Data Downloaded from Earthpoint <http://www.earthpoint.us/TopoMap.aspx>
- Maine Designated State Heritage Fish Waters provided by ME LUPC, from ME DIFW data

Todd Towle Exhibit 1: NECFC and Cold Stream



Northern
Portion

Group 4
Exhibit 8 - TT

Todd Towle Exhibit 1: NECEC and Cold Stream

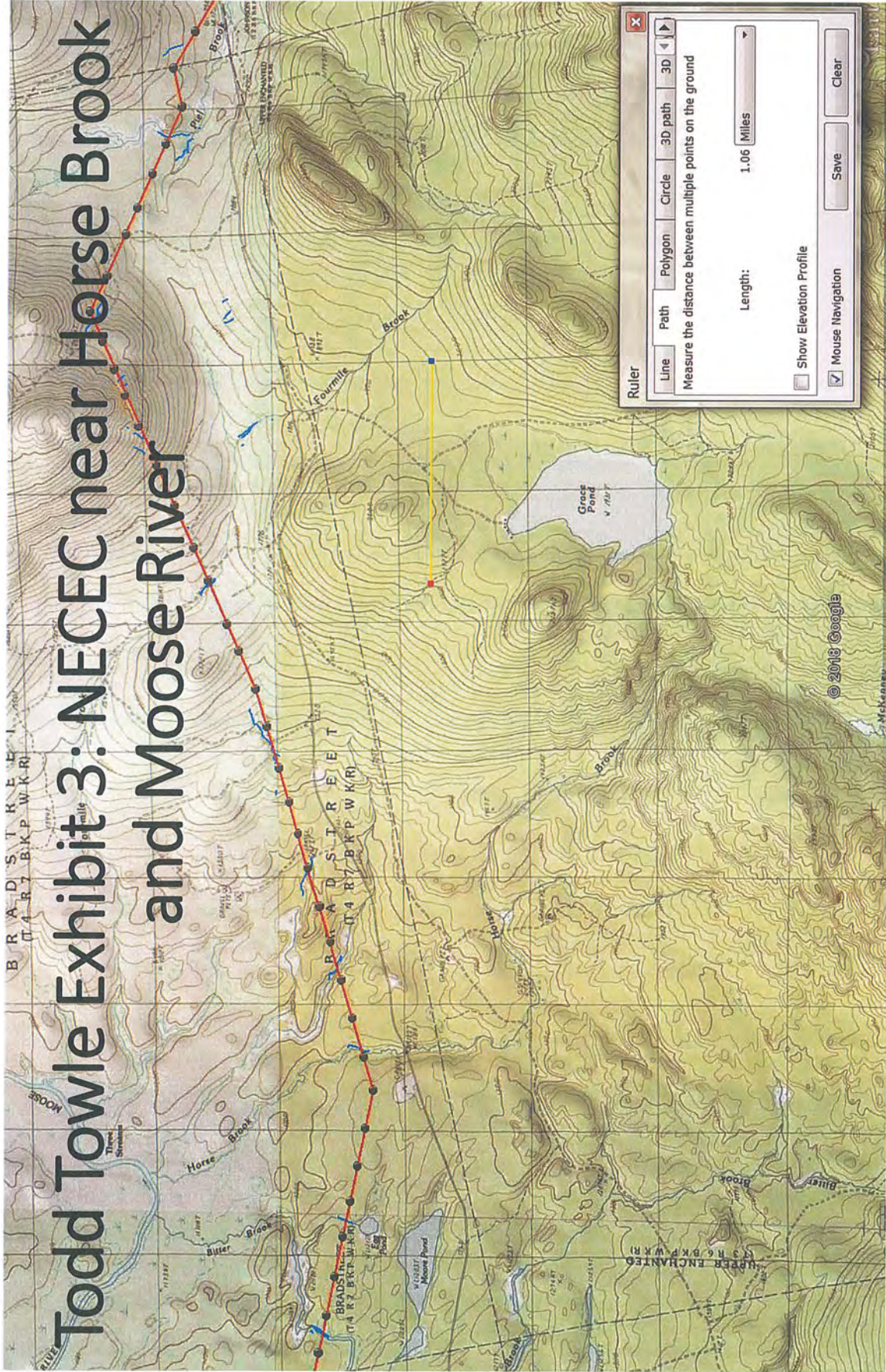
Southern
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Todd Towle Exhibit 2: NECEC near Gold Brook and Rock Pond

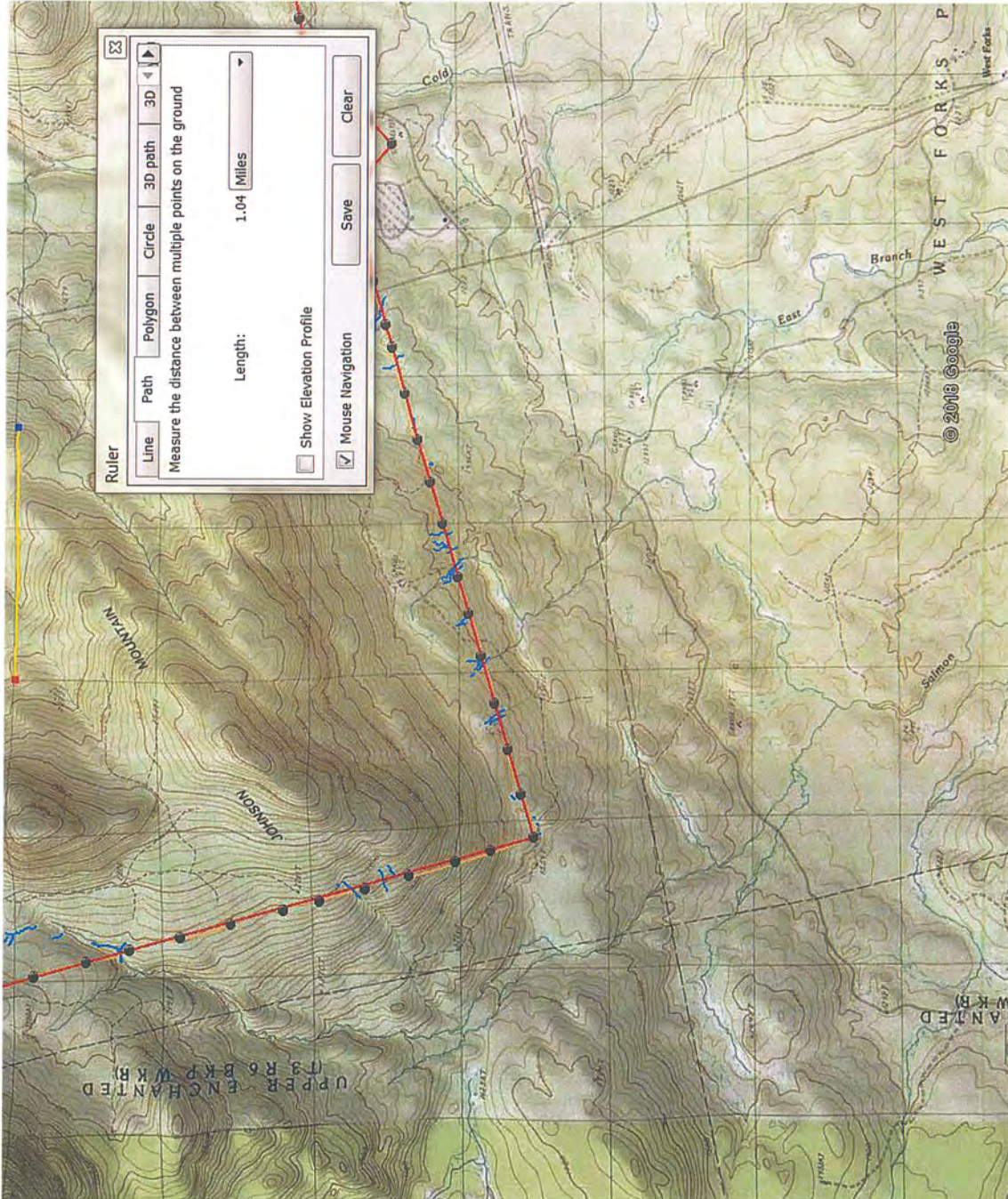


Group 4
Exhibit
9-77

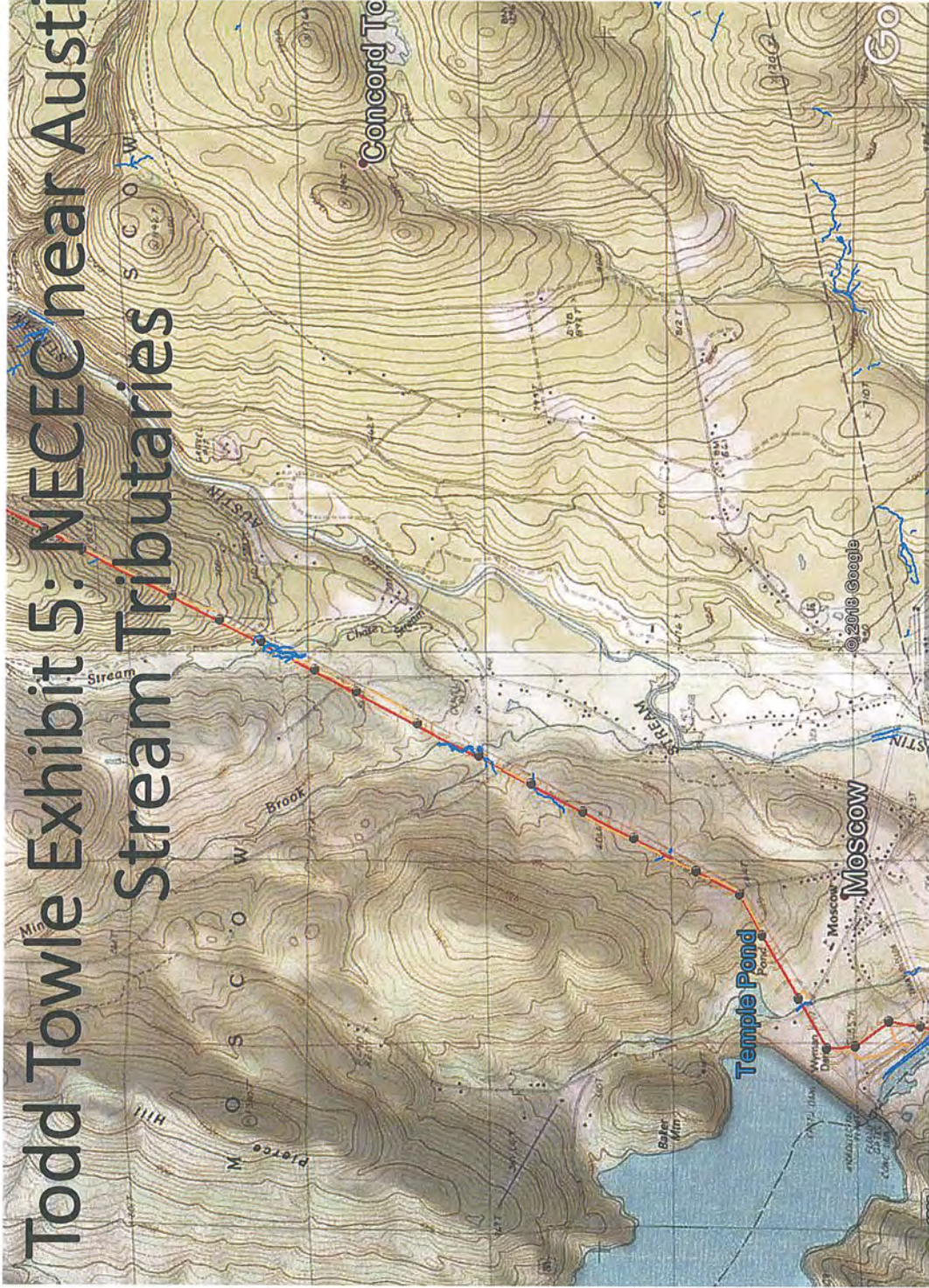


Todd Towle Exhibit 4: NECEC near Salmon Stream Headwaters

Group 4
Exhibit 11-TT



Todd Towle Exhibit 5: NECEC near Austin Stream Tributaries



Todd Towle Exhibit 6: NECEC Near Beattie Pond

