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STATE OF MAINE  
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

September 28, 2017

Hon. Paul R. LePage, Governor  
Office of the Governor  
1 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Study of Conserved Lands Owned by Nonprofit Organizations

Dear Governor LePage:

As you may know, the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF Committee) has been tasked with the "Study of Conserved Lands Owned by Nonprofit Organizations" pursuant to Part TT, section TT-2 of the General Fund Biennial Budget. The ACF Committee has scheduled the first study meeting on Thursday, October 12, 2017 at 10 AM. We are writing to you to request the participation of Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department of ACF) and Maine Revenue Services (MRS).

The duties of the ACF Committee as outlined in the authorizing legislation are as follows:

*The committee shall review and evaluate for conserved lands owned by nonprofit organizations:*

- A. The property tax payments nonprofit conservation organizations make on those conserved lands including property tax payments, payments in lieu of taxes and other similar payments;*
- B. The economic impact of those conserved lands on other real property, including working farms and commercial forest land, and the access to those conserved lands for licensed Maine guides, commercial fishermen and marine shellfish and worm harvesters;*
- C. The economic impact of those conserved lands on the public and Maine's tourism economy, including opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, snowmobile, canoe and engage in other outdoor recreational activities. The committee shall determine the miles of trails and the number of water access sites and similar recreational infrastructure;*
- D. The community benefits of those conserved lands owned by nonprofit conservation organizations, including education programs, downtown revitalization efforts, community gardens, youth sports activities and similar initiatives; and*
- E. Examine any other issues that the committee determines are related to the purpose of the study.*

We are requesting that staff from the Department of ACF attend the October 12 meeting to provide the ACF Committee with:

- an update on Part TT, section TT-1 relating to the conservation easement registry; and
- the department's perspective on the economic impact of conserved lands owned by nonprofit organizations (see paragraphs B and C under the committee's study duties above).

We are also requesting that staff from MRS attend the October 12 meeting to provide the ACF Committee with information on resource protection-focused current use tax programs – namely, Tree Growth, Farmland, Open Space, and Working Waterfront tax programs.

Thank you for your consideration. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact staff for the ACF Committee study, Karen Nadeau or Deirdre Schneider at 287-1670.

Sincerely,

<sup>KSN</sup>  
Paul T. Davis, Sr.

Sen. Paul T. Davis, Sr.  
Senate Chair

<sup>KSN</sup>  
Michelle Dunphy

Rep. Michelle Ann Dunphy  
House Chair

cc: Walt Whitcomb, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
Mari Wells, Assistant to Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
David Ledew, Director, Maine Revenue Services  
Stephanie Ham, Executive Assistant to the Governor  
ACF Committee members