



Maine Coast Heritage Trust

A Statewide Land Conservation Organization

Testimony on LD 593: An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, my name is Jeff Romano. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust in support of LD 593.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust seeks to advance the conservation of lands and waters in Maine to ensure ecological wellbeing and foster thriving communities. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 185,000 acres, including over 160 places open for traditional outdoor recreation.

Four years ago, the Governor worked on bipartisan legislation to direct \$40 million into Land for Maine's Future (LMF), \$10 million a year for four years. As we near the end of the fourth year, the LMF program has spent or committed most of these funds. In the process, the program is on track to:

- Expand public access for traditional outdoor recreational activities on 80,000 acres of land, spread out across more than 50 communities throughout the state,
- Preserve more than 29,000 acres of working forestlands,
- Protect more than 9,000 acres of critical deer habitat in Northern Maine,
- Conserve a dozen productive farms and agricultural areas,
- Protect seven working waterfront properties, and
- Secure five new recreational water access sites.

These recent accomplishments build upon a nearly four-decade long track record of success. Since Maine voters first approved funding for LMF in 1987, the program has protected:

- Over 640,000 acres of conservation and recreation lands with guaranteed access for traditional outdoor recreational opportunities, including hiking, hunting, wildlife watching, and fishing,
- 73 recreational water access sites for boating, fishing, and swimming,
- More than 158 miles of former railroad corridors available for trail users, including ATV riders and snowmobilers,
- 42 farms totaling 9,819 acres,
- 30 commercial working waterfront properties from York to Eastport, and
- More than 365,000 acres of privately-owned working forestlands.

Maine people continue to look toward LMF as a critical tool for both supporting key natural resource-based industries including fishing, farming, forestry, and tourism, as well as securing public access to special outdoor places of regional and statewide importance that make our state a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

We encourage the committee to vote ought to pass on LD 593 to ensure LMF can continue to benefit our people, our economy, and our quality of life.