

Rachel Hovel
New Vineyard, Maine
LD 362

I am submitting testimony in support of the proposed bond to fund the Land for Maine's Future program, LD 362.

I work as an aquatic ecologist and an educator, and I am a resident of New Vineyard, Maine. Part of my research examines how habitat diversity across the landscape supports biodiversity and resilience to environmental change. Protecting habitat diversity, through thoughtful conservation programs like Land for Maine's Future, is a primary tool for supporting Maine's ecosystems and the natural features that support many aspects of our economy and identity.

Conserved lands have numerous direct benefits for adjacent communities. These include providing connections to the natural world that enhance wellbeing for all ages, and generating economic activity that supports Maine's ranking of #6 in the country for the contribution of outdoor recreation to the state's economy. Even communities not immediately adjacent to conserved lands reap their benefits--for example, downstream water quality is enhanced by protecting headwater habitats, and forest conservation helps meet goals for carbon sequestration.

Conservation programs like LMF are essential to support these benefits to Maine. Thank you for considering options to support this important program.