

Senator Peggy Rotundo
Representative Drew Gattine
Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs
Via electronic delivery
November 14, 2025

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the AFA Committee,

The Appalachian Mountain Club strongly and enthusiastically supports refinancing the Land for Maine's Future program. We thank Senator Pierce for her support in bringing forward LD 1312, *An Act to Provide a Source of Revenue for School Construction and for the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund.*

AMC is a people-oriented conservation nonprofit representing 90,000 members from Maine to Virginia. Our mission is the protection, understanding, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We have 6,200 members in Maine and own 127,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County managed for multiple use, including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and outdoor education. We pay property taxes, in recognition of the need for services to the communities where we steward land.

The Land for Maine's Future program is vital to our communities, our economy, our physical and mental well-being, and our food systems. Since its establishment in 1987, LMF has helped to conserve more than 660,000 acres of Maine land, including 42 farms consisting of nearly 10,000 acres, 30 working waterfront projects, and 73 water access points that support fishing and other forms of recreation. The majority of conserved lands are open to hunting.

Equally important, conserved land is a critical tool in combatting biodiversity loss and climate change, two issues that threaten our future. The world faces a potentially catastrophic biodiversity loss crisis. The 2024 *Living Planet* report found that monitored wildlife populations have declined by an average of 73% since 1970. The leading cause of species decline is habitat loss.

Maine has experienced devastating impacts of climate change, including loss of human life, destruction of public and private property, severe drought, and increased forest fires. We must act boldly to mitigate the threat. That's why Maine's revised Climate Action Plan recommends conserving 30% of Maine's land by 2030. With only 22% of the state conserved to date, we are well behind on meeting that target. Thus, the Plan recommends establishing a permanent, ongoing source of funding for the program. Reaching the goal of 30% land conservation will also support Maine's \$8.3 forest products industry.



Having access to natural areas and their scenic beauty is also fundamental to both our outdoor recreation economy and our \$9 billion tourism industry. Outdoor recreation contributes \$3 billion to Maine's economy each year and employs 40,000 Mainers. From Mt. Agamenticus to the Aroostook Valley Rail Trail, from Rumford Whitecap to Jasper Beach, LMF conserves the beauty and peace that visitors seek, and the close-to-home recreation opportunities that keep communities livable and Mainers healthy.

Today, the LMF program has pledged virtually all of its available funds. We recognize the budget challenges facing Maine. Yet, to ensure the continued production and harvest of food, action to counter climate change and biodiversity loss, support for the vital commercial forest products and tourism industries, and the well-being of people and communities, we need to replenish the program. We look forward to working with you, Senator Pierce, and your colleagues to identify both short-term and long-term solutions.

Thank you,

Eliza Townsend
Maine Conservation Policy Director