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Kaitlyn Nuzzo, Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Maine
kaitlyn.nuzzo@tnc.org



Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: LD 2187 - An Act to Update Certain Water Quality Standards and to Reclassify Certain Waters of the State

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Kaitlyn Nuzzo and I am the Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to submit written comments in support of LD 2187 - An Act to Update Certain Water Quality Standards and to Reclassify Certain Waters of the State.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres. TNC works closely with state agencies – including the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) and Marine Resources (DMR) – on a variety of levels to ensure Maine’s fisheries and the communities that rely on them are sustained and supported into the future.

While TNC did not offer specific proposals for this Triennial Review, staff from TNC had the opportunity to attend meetings to discuss some of the proposals that were reviewed throughout the process and submitted written public comments on the Maine DEP’s Recommendations in June 2025.

TNC supports the changes proposed for the state’s Water Classification Program, specifically the changes around adopting nutrient criteria for Class AA, A, B, and C waters. We also support the proposed upgrades of classification for sections of the Kennebec River Basin, Penobscot River Basin, and Androscoggin River Basin. We encouraged the Department to include several other classification upgrades in our June 2026 public comments that were incorporated into this final proposal, specifically upgrades to the Sandy River & tributaries and Temple Stream & tributaries. These important upgrades pertain to waters identified to support, or potentially support, Atlantic salmon as well as other migratory species and high-quality native brook trout habitat important to our freshwater ecosystems. Ever since the listing of Atlantic salmon in 1999, the State and many conservation organizations have been working to enhance this species’ survival and propagation. DEP has been an important contributor to this effort, especially by protecting significant habitat through upgrades to water classification.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of LD 2187 and the Board of Environmental Protection’s Recommendations from the 2025 Triennial Review.