



***SAM-ILA***

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Testimony in Support of LD 1969

An Act to Expand the Use of Funds to Support Land Conservation

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Presented by David Trahan, Executive Director of the SAM-Institute for  
Legislative Action

Monday, May 22nd, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Rep. Pluecker, members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, my name is David Trahan and I am representing the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Institute for Legislative Action and I am testifying in support of LD 1969, An Act to Expand the Use of Funds to Support Land Conservation.

It is not a well-known fact, but the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine was instrumental in the effort that established the LMF program in 1987, so it should be no surprise we helped to draft LD 1969. The idea for this bill was hatched last winter while Tom Abello, Jeff Romano and I were ice fishing on Biscay Pond. After years of fighting together with our coalition partners to save and fund the LMF program, we decided to work on a policy that would stabilize and build predictability into the program's funding and remove the political bickering of the past. From those discussions LD 1969 was born.

This legislation is designed to mirror the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. If enacted, LMF will be able to accept revenues from a variety of sources, including businesses seeking to meet environmental mitigation requirements associated with DEP permit applications, general fund dollars appropriated by the legislature, investment income, and private contributions.

The LMF Trust program will operate like it has in the past, except, now the program will retain interest and be able to use these dividends to invest back in the program, acquiring conservation and recreation lands, working farms, and working waterfronts. In addition, LD 1969 empowers the LMF Board to fund infrastructure investments on conserved lands such as trails, wildlife habitat, boat access, campgrounds, and other ways to get people on the land.

This legislation accomplishes several worthy goals. It saves money for Maine taxpayers by reducing the need to use bond to fund the acquisition of public lands. It is also an initial step toward securing more consistent funding, which will instill the confidence and stability necessary to achieve multi-year public land purchases. SAM has been excited to see the tremendous work IFW has accomplished in recent years protecting valuable deer wintering habitat in northern Maine, but this effort is far from complete. In the end, LD 1969 will ensure LMF can continue to preserve critical deer habitat and provide other conservation benefits for Maine people.

Thank you to our friends in the Governor's Office, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Audubon, and all the other outdoor partners that will help us get this bill across the finish line. Finally, thank you to Senator Pierce and the co-sponsors of LD 1969.