



**Testimony of Shelley Megquier, Policy & Research Director, Maine Farmland Trust, to the 132nd
Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
March 13, 2025**

Good afternoon Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Shelley Megquier and I am the Policy & Research Director at Maine Farmland Trust (MFT). I am providing testimony on behalf of MFT in support of LD 758 – *Resolve, To Update Flood Mapping in the Sandy River Watershed to Federal Emergency Management Standards*.

MFT is a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Our goals are to keep agricultural lands working and help farmers and their communities thrive. Since our founding in 1999, MFT has helped to permanently protect farmland in every county in Maine, amounting to nearly 57,000 acres across 345 farms. Our Farm Network includes more than 550 farms that have participated in MFT's programming either through an agricultural easement or through one of our programs. Our main program areas are Farmland Protection, Farmland Access, Stewardship, Farm Business Planning, PFAS Support, Climate Resilience, and Policy and Research.

There are farms in MFT's network who have been impacted by flood conditions within the Sandy River watershed. To share just two examples: one farm has experienced cropland flooding and erosion/deposition of soil due to flood conditions; another noticed negative impacts to soil fertility and production the growing season after severe flooding. This part of Maine is one of our State's most active and vibrant agricultural communities; farms within the Sandy River watershed contribute significantly to Maine's agricultural economy and to food security in their communities. LD 758 seeks to update the information that these farmers and other community members have at their fingertips so that they can make more informed decisions to better ensure the success of their businesses and to improve conservation outcomes.

LD 758 directs the Maine Office of Community Affairs to conduct a geomorphic study within the Sandy River watershed to update flood hazard data. MFT's understanding is that this study would provide helpful information to farmers and other landowners within this watershed as extreme precipitation events continue in Maine and increase flood risk. Equipped with updated flood hazard data, farmers can better plan ahead, make informed land use decisions, and consider adopting certain practices to lessen the impacts of flooding if they are within a flood zone (e.g. cultivating or maintaining riparian buffers or changing crop types being cultivated). This updated flood hazard data could also help conservation organizations like MFT with decision making on where to focus available farmland protection dollars so that we focus limited resources on permanently protecting Maine's highest quality farmland. Up-to-date information would also aid us in supporting farmers with climate adaptation planning and programming and connecting farmers grappling with the impacts of climate change with available resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 758. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.