



Environmental Priorities Coalition

Testimony in support of LD362, *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program*

April 10, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and distinguished member of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs, my name is Cathy Breen. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) in support of LD362 *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Replenish the Land for Maine's Future Program*. Maine's EPC is an inclusive statewide alliance of 39 conservation, climate action, and public health organizations. Each year we collectively identify a slate of policy priorities to act on the climate crisis, further environmental justice, protect land, water, and wildlife, and cultivate healthy Maine communities. Replenishing the Land for Maine's Future fund is one of nine EPC priorities for the 132nd Legislature thus far.

The EPC has long championed the conservation and protection of Maine's land, water and air. We have worked with partners for many years in the Land for Maine's Future Coalition, a group of allies who work to protect and maintain funding in Maine's signature conservation program that began in 1987. LD362 proposes a General Obligation bond to replenish the existing Land for Maine's Future fund with \$50 million. As you may recall, the last deposit of \$40 million into LMF came through a budget appropriation (via the Cascade) rather than issuing a general obligation bond. Given well known budget constraints of the moment, issuing a bond makes more sense at this time. As a reminder, the **LMF program provides terrific return on investment**, contributing approximately 20-30% of the funds on any given project, and leveraging resources from the community and the private sector to fund the remainder.

Since 1987, LMF has helped state and local partners to complete projects in all of Maine's 16 counties. Types of land protected include; mountain summits; shorelines of rivers, lakes, and ponds; coastal islands; beaches; forests; grasslands; wildlife habitat; farmland; and wetlands. LMF assistance has put the following types of special places in the public trust forever:

- 73 water access sites with over 66 miles of shoreline on rivers, lakes, and ponds
- 41 farms and 9,884 acres of farmlands conserved
- 30 commercial working waterfront properties

The EPC works to meet the current climate crisis in various ways, including working to meet the state's goal to increase conserved natural and working lands to 30 percent by 2030.¹ Meeting this goal will help

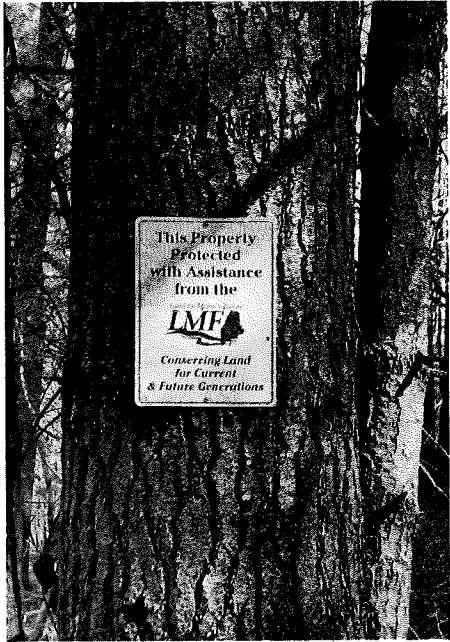
- Protect land from the effects of climate change and keep ecosystems alive for future generations;
- Support sustainable forestry practices that increase carbon storage and help forests survive climate change;
- Preserve soils for sustainable local agriculture and farming;
- Create economic opportunity through development of Maine's forest products and agriculture;
- Protect working waterfronts that sustain marine industries and fisheries and aquaculture

For these reasons, the EPC urges a vote of "Ought to Pass" on LD362. Thank you for your consideration.

¹https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/sites/maine.gov.climateplan/files/2024-11/MWW_2024_Book_112124.pdf, p. 107

FUND LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE (LMF)

Protect Maine forests, farmlands, and working waterfronts, ensure public access, and fight climate change.



Libby Hill Forest in Gray, ME

Land for Maine's Future is effective and popular.

- LMF is Maine's most successful and celebrated land conservation program. It keeps working forests and farmland open, secures waterfront access for seafood harvesters, and ensures public access for outdoor recreation.
- Over nearly four decades, LMF has helped conserve more than 650,000 acres, including: 330,000 acres of working forests; 9,819 acres of farmland; 1,272 miles of shoreland; 158 miles of recreational trails; 73 recreational water access sites; and 30 commercial working waterfront properties. All 16 counties have benefited.
- The program is critical to protecting Maine's character and traditions.
- Land conservation is the most basic step we can take to fight climate change and biodiversity loss. A key recommendation of the state's updated climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, is to secure long-term, reliable funding for LMF. As we work together toward that goal, interim funding is essential, as the fund is almost empty.

LMF has committed virtually all of its funding, but the need remains great.

- Maine has experienced unprecedented development pressure since the pandemic, putting farmland at risk, limiting waterfront access, and making it harder to enjoy the places we love.
- Meanwhile, we have continued to experience the devastating impacts of climate change. Land conservation can help us slow climate change and adapt to our new reality.
- Now is the time to invest in working lands, in our recreational economy, in climate resilience, and in the beauty and open space that define our state.

Fund Land for Maine's Future.

- Policymakers can fund LMF through a direct budget appropriation or through a bond.
- LMF supports Maine's \$11.7 billion agriculture sector; \$8.5 billion forest products industry; \$7 billion tourism economy; and \$3.3 billion seafood harvest.
- Every dollar spent by the LMF program must be matched, doubling its impact.



Bumblers Organic Farm in Windham, ME

Fund LMF. Protect the natural resources that define our state.

For more information, please contact
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Environmental Priorities Coalition

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Acadia Center



BICYCLE COALITION OF MAINE



Conservation Law Foundation



Solutions for a Toxic-Free Tomorrow



Friends of Casco Bay Casco BAYKEEPER

Gateway Community Services Maine



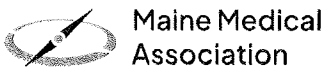
Immigrant Welcome Center GREATER PORTLAND



MAINE AUDUBON



MEEA
Maine Environmental Education Association



MPHA
Maine Public Health Association



MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY



Natural Resources Council of Maine



passivhaus MAINE



SIERRA CLUB MAINE CHAPTER



Union of Concerned Scientists
Science for a healthy planet and safer world