



LD 2212 – Supplemental Budget Proposal for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

February 27, 2026

Chair Rotundo, Chair Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Chair Talbot Ross, Chair Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Megan Gean-Gendron. I represent The Nature Conservancy in Maine and I'm here providing joint testimony on behalf of Kaitlyn Nuzzo of TNC and Jeff Romano of Maine Coast Heritage Trust **in support of the supplemental budget proposal for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.** We would also like to support an amendment to the supplemental budget that is being presented by the Department.

Conservation is at the core of the work both of our organizations do here in Maine. We work in tandem with our partners at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF) to both advance our conservation work and support their role in planning, conservation, management, and research. Maine's public lands, state parks, and forests are incredible assets that underpin our quality of life and economic opportunities. TNC and MCHT support robust funding for DACF and its many divisions and programs.

Specifically, our organizations support the following budget requests:

Department Amendment to Add Funds to the Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund

Our organizations have been committed to a thriving Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program since it was established by voters in 1987. Our consistent focus has been on identifying funds to support this successful and popular source of conservation funding. We understand that DACF will be presenting an amendment to the Supplemental Budget that builds on bipartisan legislation and funding allocations we have championed in the past by identifying a dedicated, ongoing revenue source for the LMF Trust Fund. This language would direct 25% of the accrued interest on the State's Budget Stabilization Fund to the LMF Trust Fund, where it will continue to earn interest and reinvest in this important funding program. We thank Senator Pierce for putting initial language forward in LD 1312, and appreciate Commissioner Beal and the Administration for offering this amendment to improve the original concept heard by AFA in November.

Land Management and Planning (Z239, page A-10)

This program provides a wide variety of services including managing the state's public lands assets, performing sustainable timber management, overseeing Habitat Management Areas, and providing recreational opportunities for the public. We support their requests across the board and specifically support their request for one-time funding for Public Lands operational expenses. Despite exemplary forest management strategy, timber harvesting relies on markets which have been unstable for the last several years.

Since a substantial portion of the funding to support state owned public lands comes from revenues from timber harvesting, the Bureau is facing a budget shortfall. We fully support

this one-time allocation from the General Fund to cover the shortfall and ensure there are no gaps in Maine's ability to manage these critical lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments in support of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's budget proposal.

Contact Information:

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***The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together.*

***Maine Coast Heritage Trust** seeks to advance the conservation of lands and waters in Maine to ensure ecological wellbeing and foster thriving communities. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 185,000 acres, including over 160 places open for traditional outdoor recreation.*