



July 7, 2026

Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Application to the FHWA National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear FHWA Culvert AOP Selection Committee:

The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) is writing to express our strong support for the MaineDOT Culvert AOP applications for projects located in Downeast and Midcoast Maine.

ASF is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon and their ecosystems. We endorse the projects included in this Culvert AOP application, as they will directly and significantly expand available habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and other native sea-run fish species.

The State of Maine is actively restoring Atlantic salmon runs by removing barriers and upgrading culverts, reconnecting rivers and streams to historic spawning and rearing habitat. Atlantic salmon are recognized as a highest-priority species in the Maine Wildlife Action Plan's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and each of these projects has been carefully chosen through a collaborative process between MaineDOT and the Maine Department of Marine Resources to determine the culverts that will make the most impact for fish passage and improving the conditions, safety, and resilience of core transportation infrastructure.

The proposed culvert replacements directly advance shared federal, state, and local priorities: improving public safety, supporting rural and coastal economies, and restoring critical habitat for anadromous fish, including endangered Atlantic salmon, alewife, river herring, American shad, and sea lamprey. These sea-run fish are keystone species in Maine's watersheds, transporting marine nutrients upstream, feeding a wide range of wildlife, and supporting complex food webs from rivers to the Gulf of Maine. Their presence signals healthy, connected rivers and streams, and their recovery helps restore resilient ecosystems, improve water quality, and sustain cultural and economic traditions tied to Maine's working waters.

We respectfully urge you to give the MaineDOT application your strongest consideration and to provide the funding necessary to advance these projects that represent critical points of community safety and restored habitat for important fish species. This investment will secure vital road crossings and deliver lasting ecological and community benefits for Maine's sea-run fisheries and the residents

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and visitors to the region who relish the opportunity to connect with nature, while supporting local harvesters and economies.

Thank you for your consideration of these important projects. Please feel free to contact me at 207-725-2833 or jburrows@asfmaine.org if you require any additional information regarding our support.

Sincerely,

John R.J. Burrows
Vice President, U.S. Conservation
Atlantic Salmon Federation



Sean McMaster
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

July 10, 2026

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Application to the FHWA National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear Administrator McMaster,

The Downeast Salmon Federation (DSF) is writing to express our full support of MaineDOT's request to the FHWA Culvert AOP Program for the replacement of the road stream culverts across the watersheds of the endangered Atlantic salmon Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in Eastern ("Downeast") and Midcoast Maine. These crossings are undersized and impact passage of native migratory fish and other aquatic organisms, disrupt natural ecological processes, and cause ongoing safety problems for local communities.

Downeast Salmon Federation's mission is to conserve and restore wild sea-run fish and their habitats in Downeast Maine. Our mission is grounded in a vision of abundant returns of all sea-run fish species, supporting the ecological, cultural, and economic vitality of our region and beyond. Since our inception in 1982, DSF has coordinated numerous in-stream and buffer restoration projects and guided advocacy, education, and outreach on sustainable fisheries, communities, and the economy at local, state, and federal levels.

Atlantic salmon are recognized as a highest-priority species in the Maine Wildlife Action Plan's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Improving connectivity between ocean and freshwater habitats—essential for the recovery of this and other anadromous species—depends on identifying and replacing key barriers to fish passage along Maine's transportation corridors. The projects included in this Culvert AOP application will directly benefit state and federally endangered Atlantic salmon, as well as other anadromous fish, in areas designated as high or highest priority in Maine. In support of this critical effort, DSF strongly endorses the projects included in this Culvert AOP application, as they will directly and significantly expand available habitat for endangered anadromous Atlantic salmon, as well as for associated forage species.



DSF is committed to working with MaineDOT to successfully delivery the FHWA Culvert AOP projects. As a partner, DSF will support MaineDOT through implementation across all sites, including gaining community and partner support to advance these crossing replacement projects. DSF's current commitments to these watersheds include technical support, fisheries monitoring, and public outreach, and we look forward to supporting these projects that will bolster the conservation, ecological, and economic goals in the region.

DSF is in full support of MaineDOT's efforts to address long-standing fish passage issues, support regional and local economies in these watersheds, and benefit river and stream ecosystems through these aquatic organism passage projects. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dwayne Shaw', is written in a cursive style.

Dwayne Shaw
Executive Director

July 10, 2026



Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Application to the FHWA National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear FHWA Culvert AOP Selection Committee,

On behalf of Midcoast Conservancy, I am writing to express our support for the Maine Department of Transportation's Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) application for Midcoast Maine.

Midcoast Conservancy's mission is to protect and restore vital lands and waters in midcoast Maine on a scale that matters. Our work supports healthy wildlife and fish populations and connects people to the outdoors across the rivers, forests, farms, and communities of Maine's midcoast region. We work with towns, landowners, partner organizations, and state and federal agencies to improve water quality, restore fish passage, and build resilient communities. Our work includes on-the-ground projects to remove barriers, upgrade undersized and failing road-stream crossings, and reconnect habitat for sea-run fish such as alewife and Atlantic salmon throughout the Sheepscot watershed.

The culvert projects in this application align directly with that mission and build on a growing legacy of successful fish passage restoration in Maine. The structures in this proposal, which were carefully identified through collaboration between MaineDOT and the Maine Department of Marine Resources, are among the key culverts that currently inhibit fish passage in the region.

As Maine undertakes ambitious fish passage restoration projects across the state, we are already seeing alewife runs grow stronger where culverts have been replaced. These improvements benefit local harvests; provide bait for our \$460M+ lobster fishery; support community events such as the Damariscotta Mills Alewife Festival that draw nature enthusiasts and economic activity to the area; and enhance overall river health. The five culvert projects in Vassalboro, Chelsea, Montville, and Camden will help reconnect important stretches of stream and give these fish a better chance to return and thrive, in turn benefiting Gulf of Maine fishermen as alewife successfully return to sea and feed cod, haddock, striped bass, and other species important to recreational and commercial harvesters.

There are many co-benefits to healthy, restored ecosystems, including rivers that support local traditions, community identity, and the regional economy. Locals and visitors alike support the economy in the midcoast linked to activities such as recreational fishing, paddling, and enjoying clean, flowing waterways. By improving these culverts, we are supporting the long-term future of these activities while reducing the risk and expense associated with failing infrastructure.

Please give the MaineDOT application your strongest consideration: these culvert replacement projects are critical for community safety, restoring habitat for anadromous fish, and supporting the heritage commercial and recreational fishing activities in our region.

Thank you for your consideration of these important projects.

Please feel free to contact me at 207-389-5152 or kristin@midcoastconservancy.org if you require any additional information regarding our support.

Sincerely,

Kristin Pennock
Co-Executive Director



Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

July 9, 2026

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Application to the FHWA National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear FHWA Culvert AOP Selection Committee,

On behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), I am writing to express strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) applications for downeast and midcoast Maine.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust is a statewide conservation organization with a mission to advance the conservation of lands and waters in Maine to ensure ecological wellbeing and foster thriving communities. We seek to support public access, healthy habitats, and resilient coastal communities for future generations. Across the coast, we work with local, state, federal, and Tribal partners to protect and restore salt marshes, rivers, and coastal wetlands; improve water quality; and enhance fish passage so that sea-run fish and other native species can complete their life cycles. Our conservation and restoration efforts—from headwater streams and tidal marshes to working waterfronts—are grounded in the understanding that healthy, connected ecosystems are essential to both wildlife and the people who depend on Maine's coast for their livelihoods and quality of life.

The proposed culvert replacements are beneficial for both natural and human communities, advancing shared federal, state, and local priorities: improving public safety and road reliability, supporting rural and coastal economies, and restoring critical habitat for Atlantic salmon, alewife, river herring, American shad, sea lamprey, and other anadromous species. These sea-run fish are keystone species in Maine's watersheds, transporting marine nutrients upstream, feeding a wide range of wildlife, and supporting complex food webs from rivers to the Gulf of Maine. Their presence signals healthy, connected rivers and streams, and their recovery helps restore resilient ecosystems, improve water quality, and sustain cultural and economic traditions tied to Maine's coastal communities.

Communities along the coast of Maine rely heavily on lobstering, ground fishing, clamming, alewife harvesting, and small, family-owned waterfront businesses, and all of these activities are connected through the health of their watersheds. In many small towns, a single road or crossing is the only reliable route for school buses, ambulances, fishermen hauling gear, and workers traveling to docks and processing plants. When a culvert fails, there is often no practical detour, creating serious risks for public safety and local economies. A recently completed community-led culvert replacement project where MCHT played a lead role and with MaineDOT assistance in Penobscot, which also was the site of a 7th annual Bagaduce River Alewife Celebration this spring, demonstrates how culvert replacement can have immediate benefits to sea-run fish while supporting community safety and producing economic and social benefits.

mcht.org

Topsham (Business) Office

1 Bowdoin Mill Island, Suite 201
Topsham, ME 04086
(207) 729-7366

Mount Desert Island Office

P.O. Box 669
Mount Desert, ME 04660
(207) 244-5100

Downeast Field Office

160 U.S. Route 1
Whiting, ME 04691
(207) 259-5043

Aldermere Farm

20 Russell Avenue
Rockport, ME 04856
(207) 236-2739

By aligning infrastructure investments with ecological restoration, the Culvert AOP Program exemplifies the kind of nature-based solutions that MCHT supports along the coast. Replacing failing or undersized culverts with structures that allow natural stream processes and fish movement not only protects communities from unsafe flooding and washouts, but also ensures that Maine's rivers, streams, wetlands, and estuaries can continue to support biodiversity, local fisheries, and economic opportunities for generations to come.

Funding for these projects would be beneficial for community transportation safety, for infrastructure resilience and for restoration of habitat for anadromous fish and watershed health.

Thank you for your consideration of these important projects. Please feel free to contact me at culbrich@mcht.org if you require any additional information regarding our support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ciona S. Ulbrich", is displayed on a light yellow rectangular background.

Ciona S. Ulbrich
Associate Director of Community Relations

July 10, 2026

Federal Highway Administration
Office of Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590
Attn: Gregory Danis

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Application to the FHWA National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear FHWA Culvert AOP Selection Committee,

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy in Maine (TNC), I am writing to express our strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) applications for Downeast and Midcoast Maine. The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to creating a world where people and nature thrive. In Maine, this means working with partners, communities, and Tribes to restore free-flowing rivers, improve fish passage, and build resilient infrastructure that benefits both people and nature.

The 17 culvert projects in MaineDOT's three application bundles build directly on that legacy of successful fish passage is actively restoring sea-run fish runs by removing outdated barriers and upgrading undersized or failing road-stream crossings, reconnecting rivers and streams to historic spawning and rearing habitat. The 12 Downeast and 5 Midcoast culvert replacements proposed here have been carefully selected through a collaborative process among MaineDOT, the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and conservation partners to prioritize locations where upgrades will have the greatest impact on anadromous fish passage while also strengthening critical transportation infrastructure, improving local and regional safety.

The proposed culvert replacements advance federal, state, and local priorities: improving public safety and road reliability, supporting local economies, and restoring critical habitat for Atlantic salmon, alewife, river herring, American shad, sea lamprey, and other anadromous species. These sea-run fish are keystone species in Maine's watersheds; their presence signals healthy, connected rivers and streams, and their recovery helps restore resilient ecosystems, improve water quality, and sustain cultural and economic traditions tied to Maine's working waters.

By aligning infrastructure investments with ecological restoration, the Culvert AOP Program exemplifies the solutions that TNC advocates for across the country and in Maine. Replacing failing or undersized culverts with structures that allow natural stream processes and fish movement protects communities from unsafe flooding and washouts while also allowing Maine's great rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds to continue to support biodiversity, local fisheries, and economic opportunities for generations to come.

We respectfully urge you to give the MaineDOT application your strongest consideration and to provide the funding necessary to advance these projects, which are critical both for community safety and for restoring habitat for anadromous fish. This investment will secure vital road crossings, enhance resilience to extreme weather, and deliver lasting ecological and community benefits for Maine's rivers, sea-run fisheries, and the residents and visitors who depend on and cherish them.



Jeremy Bell
Climate Adaptation Program Director