

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
FY2025-26 CONSOLIDATED RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY
IMPROVEMENTS “CRISI”
GRANT APPLICATION**

**Northern Aroostook Rail Gateway Modernization and
Safety Project**

Maine Department of Transportation

**APPENDIX E:
Environmental Project Description**

ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Northern Aroostook Rail Gateway Modernization and Safety Project Maine Department of Transportation

Environmental Risk/Required Approvals

The Partnership recognizes that assuring the sustainability of habitats, ecosystems and transportation infrastructure can occur together for the mutual benefit of all. MaineDOT exercises reasonable stewardship over natural resources and transportation infrastructure through its commitment to addressing aquatic organisms and wildlife habitat in cooperation with natural resource agencies.

Environmental Risk

During the development of the CRISI package, some risks were contemplated but each has a comprehensive mitigation strategy. Coordination between the design team and the environmental team will ensure that the Project goals and community needs can be met while avoiding, minimizing, and mitigation potential environmental impacts.

Required Approvals

- I. Preliminary baseline data collection will be collected to identify natural and cultural resources potentially affected by the Project. This information will be refined during design and will be used to avoid and minimize impact while meeting the purpose and need of the Project.
- II. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): The NEPA process will inform design efforts. Based on the Project scope, the Project will be classified as a Categorical Exclusion. MaineDOT and its environmental team will provide supporting information to complete the FRA Categorical Exclusion checklist. Should any issues arise, MaineDOT will work with FRA and the respective agencies to quickly resolve them. The anticipated date for NEPA completion is February 1, 2027. Public involvement will be completed in accordance with MaineDOT Public Involvement Plan and the MaineDOT NEPA Public Involvement Plan. These plans can be found at this link:
<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/env/NEPA/public/index.shtml>
- III. Historic and Archeological: The MaineDOT historic coordinator will evaluate the Project for eligibility for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) Section 106 Program Comment to Exempt Consideration of Effects to Rail Properties Within Rail Rights-of-Way (Program Comment), dated August 17, 2018. Elements of the Project that do not meet the Program Comment will be processed under Section 106 in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Maine State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Maine Department of for the Transportation Program in Maine, dated April 15, 2026. The design team will work to avoid and minimize impacts. Should adverse effects arise, MaineDOT and FRA will resolve adverse effects to historic properties in consultation with the Cultural Coordinator and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission as outlined in 36 CFR 800 and the MaineDOT Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. MaineDOT and FRA Division will

- engage federally recognized Tribes.
- IV. Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act: The MaineDOT Cultural Coordinator will review the project corridor to identify Section 4(f) resources. Project details and right-of-way information will be evaluated to avoid and minimize potential Section 4(f) uses. At this time, no right-of-way acquisition is expected and Section 4(f) use is not anticipated.
 - V. Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Essential Fisheries Habitat (EFH): The Project area includes designated Essential Fish Habitat. The project is located within the range of federally-listed Gulf of Maine Distinct Population segment of Atlantic salmon and its designated Critical Habitat. The Project is also located within the range of the federally threatened Northern Long-Eared Bat. MaineDOT and FRA will coordinate with federal agencies during Project design to avoid and/or minimize effects to EFH and ESA species and to complete the required consultations as applicable in accordance with the Project schedule.
 - VI. Section 404 Clean Water Act Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers): Freshwater wetland and stream impacts are not expected but could be required. MaineDOT will avoid and minimize temporary and permanent wetland and waterbody impacts to the extent practicable. MaineDOT anticipates that wetland impacts and any in-water work will be eligible for a Nationwide Permit. Use of In-lieu fee mitigation payments to the Maine Natural Resources Compensation Program will streamline compensatory mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts.
 - VII. Natural Resources Protection Act (Maine Department of Environmental Protection): Wetland and stream impacts are regulated by the Maine Natural Resources Protection Act. MaineDOT anticipates that any wetland and stream impacts associated with the Project will be eligible for Permit-By-Rule Chapter 305, Section 11, which is a streamlined permit process for State Transportation Facilities.
 - VIII. Stormwater (Maine Department of Environmental Protection): The Project will incorporate Best Management Practices for temporary and permanent management of soil erosion and sedimentation. Permanent measures for treatment of stormwater quantity and quality will be incorporated in accordance with Chapter 500 regulations and the Memorandum of Agreement for Stormwater Management Between the MaineDOT, MTA and Maine Department of Environmental Protection.
 - IX. Floodway/Floodplains: The Project may require construction of replacement crossings at waterbodies with designated Zone A and Zone B floodplains, though it is not anticipated. Any water/wetland crossings will be designed to avoid and minimize encroachments into designated flood zones and in accordance with Executive Order 11988. Crossings will generally be designed to improve hydraulic capacity and aquatic connectivity.

Project Risks	Mitigations
Environmental permitting/restriction: • Federally Endangered Atlantic Salmon DPS and Critical Habitat • Federally Endangered Northern Long-Eared Bat	• Choosing a final design that minimizes in water work • Constructability reviews will be completed during design to ensure the selected alternative is buildable given the various environmental restrictions

Programmatic Agreements

MaineDOT and various other state and federal departments have executed agreements to expeditiously but thoroughly review environmental impacts from projects. MaineDOT will take advantage of the following agreements, where applicable, to streamline the environmental review and approval process:

1. Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Maine State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Maine Department of for the Transportation Program in Maine, dated April 15, 2026;
2. Memorandum of Agreement for Stormwater Management Between the MaineDOT, MTA and Maine Department of Environmental Protection; and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) Section 106 Program Comment to Exempt Consideration of Effects to Rail Properties Within Rail Rights-of-Way (Program Comment), dated August 17, 2018.