



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
353 WATER STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA ME 04333-0041



Date: March 13, 2025

To: Senator, Rachel Talbot Ross, Chair
Representative, Bill Pluecker, Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

From: Judith Camuso, Commissioner of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Subject: Letter in lieu of testimony regarding L.D. 593 “An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program”

Dear Committee Members,

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, providing this letter on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 593**.

The mission of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) is to preserve, protect, and enhance the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the state as well as to enable and promote the safe enjoyment of Maine's outdoors. Land ownership and management are important to implementing the Department's mission. IFW has an active land acquisition program focused on expanding the state's network of wildlife management areas and water access sites. Additionally, our program includes working closely with partners to support their conservation projects where those projects are consistent with Department mission and priorities. We are an applicant to the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) and we also serve as a Designated State Agency to the program, working with grant recipients to steward lands and uphold LMF program requirements in perpetuity.

Throughout its history, LMF has been important for supporting Maine's recreational enthusiast. Unlike many conservation grant programs, LMF specifically requires that conservation and recreation projects are open to the public for hunting, fishing, and trapping activities.

In recent years, LMF has been essential to the protection and management of deer wintering areas. In 2021 Public Law c. 409, “An Act To Preserve Deer Habitat” was enacted. This law directs the Department to prioritize conservation and management of deer wintering sites and for LMF to prioritize funding of deer wintering area conservation efforts. Since this law was passed, thanks to LMF funds, IFW has been able to acquire more than 10,000 acres of habitat which are now being managed to benefit Maine's deer population and to provide sporting and recreation opportunities to Maine citizens.

In summary, Land for Maine's Future is an important contributor of funds for the conservation of natural and working lands and water access sites across the state and to achieving Maine's climate goals. We will provide staff for the work session to answer any questions related to our Department.