



The Nature Conservancy in Maine
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January 31, 2023

Bruce A. Van Note
Commissioner
Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Application to the USDOT FY2022 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear Commissioner Van Note,

The Nature Conservancy is writing in support of MaineDOT's and DMR's funding request to the Culvert AOP Program for replacements of road stream culverts across the watersheds of the endangered Atlantic salmon Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in Downeast Maine. These crossings are undersized and impact passage of native migratory fish and other aquatic organisms, disrupt natural ecological processes, and cause ongoing maintenance and repair problems for local communities.

Atlantic salmon are ranked as a highest priority species in the Maine Wildlife Action Plan list of species of greatest conservation need. Increasing and enhancing connectivity between ocean and freshwater habitats important to this and other anadromous species recovery relies on identifying and replacing key barriers to fish passage along Maine's transportation corridors. The road stream crossings included in this Culvert AOP application are located within Downeast and Penobscot habitat units and federally-designated critical habitat for Atlantic Salmon. Collectively, these projects would contribute to restoring access to up to 10,663 acres of habitat important to the life cycles of Atlantic salmon and anadromous prey species.

In support of this critical effort, The Nature Conservancy supports the projects included in this Culvert AOP application as directly and significantly contribute to habitat available for endangered, anadromous Atlantic salmon as well as facultative and prey species.

The Nature Conservancy is in full support of MaineDOT and DMR's efforts to restore the long-standing fish passage issues, increase climate resilience, and address other community priorities in these watersheds through culvert aquatic organism passage projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy M Bell".

Jeremy Bell
Climate Adaptation Director