



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 and DMR's funding request to the Culvert AOP Program for replacements of road stream culverts across the Sandy River watershed of the endangered Atlantic salmon Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in 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. The Sandy River provides unique and beneficial habitat features for spawning Atlantic salmon, which contributes the federal designation of much of this watershed as critical habitat for the species. The Sandy River and its tributaries represent some of the best Atlantic salmon spawning habitat left in the U.S., and its protection would decrease the risk of extirpation and extinction of the GOM DPS.

These projects will remove passage barriers on seven important tributaries of the Sandy River, which will restore species access to an up to eight miles of additional habitat. 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 the Sandy River watershed through culvert aquatic organism passage projects.

Sincerely,

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

Jeremy Bell  
Climate Adaptation Director