



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Maine Ecological Services Field Office (Service) is writing in support of MaineDOT 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 central 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. Projects included in this Culvert AOP application will directly benefit state and federally endangered Atlantic salmon and other anadromous fish in areas identified as high or highest priority in the state of Maine. Collectively, these projects will restore access for these species to approximately 2,000 acres of spawning habitat in Central Maine.

In support of this critical effort, the Service 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 Service is committed to be a strong partner to assist MaineDOT and DMR through implementation across all sites as well as help gain community and partner support to advance these crossing replacement projects. The Service's current commitments to some of these projects include agency partnering, permitting, and post-construction monitoring. If awarded, the Service is committed to working with MaineDOT and DMR to successfully deliver the Culvert AOP projects.

The Service 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,

 Digitally signed by
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Patrick Dockens
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