

On November 6th, Maine voters will go to the polls and vote on five ballot questions. Question 4 is a \$35.5 million bond request that includes funds for land conservation, Maine's state parks and historic sites, riverfront community development, and working waterfront preservation. The question reads:

Do you favor a \$35,500,000 bond issue to invest in land conservation, water access, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, farmland and working waterfront and to invest in state parks, historic sites and riverfront, community and farm infrastructure to be matched by at least \$21,875,000 in private and public contributions?

8 Good Reasons to Vote Yes on Question 4

- Between 1980 and 2000, Maine lost 870,000 acres of farmland and forest to suburban housing, *the second highest loss in the country*. For example, the U.S. Forest Service has identified forests surrounding Bangor/Brewer as the most threatened by development of any forests in the nation. If this trend continues, Maine will severely compromise the "brand" that is the backbone of Maine's economy. Maine's farms, forests and waterways support jobs, bring healthy food to our table, provide recreational benefits and are integral to Maine's scenic beauty. The Natural Resource bond supports programs that pair conservation and economic development as a means of preserving our quality places and quality of life.
- Since its inception in 1987, the **Land for Maine's Future Program** has leveraged nearly \$100 million dollars of federal and private matching funds; conserved over 440,000 acres distributed across every county in Maine; and protected over 919 miles of shorefront, 113 miles of rail-trails and over 5,800 acres of farmland. Communities have rallied around these projects because they preserve what we value today and what we hope to provide for future generations. However, the program has committed all of its conservation dollars and without the passage of Question 4 will not be able to continue its important work.
- The **State Parks and Historic Sites** funding in the bond will support improvements at Maine treasures ranging from Cobscook Bay State Park in Washington County to Fort McClary in Kittery, from Peaks-Kenny and Lily Bay State Parks in the Piscataquis Highlands, to Lake Saint George State Park in Waldo County and Popham Beach State Park, and a major snowmobile and ATV trestle in Aroostook County. Travel and tourism have become Maine's largest industry, with residents and visitors spending \$6.2 billion on tourism related purchases and services in 2004. When tourists are asked why they come to Maine, the top rated qualities center on the abundance of scenic and natural areas, the high quality of recreational opportunities, and Maine's small, historic towns. Maine's state parks, just a subset of Maine's conserved lands, produced nearly \$100 million of economic activity in 2005.

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- Communities across the state have rediscovered clean and healthy rivers as a key to increasing economic opportunities and preserving Maine's way of life. **The Riverfront Community Development** funds will help ensure our rivers remain healthy while also promoting community revitalization and compatible economic development. With more than 30,000 miles of rivers in the state, and two-thirds of Maine citizens living in riverfront communities, the potential benefits of the riverfront Community developments funds are enormous. This program will: promote and enhance environmentally sustainable economic activity along rivers; help local communities revitalize their riverfronts by transforming run-down areas along rivers into productive use; restore and improve habitat for fish and wildlife; develop and promote a range of public uses supporting new jobs, public access, boating and fishing; allow communities to invest in riverfront parks and trails; and leverage other private and public resources (all projects will require at least a \$2 match for every \$1 from this fund).
- The **Working Waterfront** funding will extend the Department of Marine Resources' highly successful Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program. Recent research from the Island Institute shows that fewer than 20 miles of Maine's 5,300-mile-long coast remain available to support those who rely on water access for fishing-related jobs. By protecting working waterfronts, we are investing in approximately 40,000 jobs that contribute \$740 million to Maine's economy.
- Farmland protection saves communities money. When the average costs of community services are compared nationally: residential uses typically cost \$1.15 of every \$1 tax dollar paid, while Farm/Forest uses cost only \$0.36 per \$1 tax dollar paid (commercial/industrial uses cost \$0.27 per \$1 paid). Over the past 20 years, the Land for Maine's Future Program has invested \$6.2 million and leveraged \$6.7 million match, to assist 21 families in protecting 6,718 farmland acres. By June 2008, another 7 families will have protected another 1,673 acres, and the total investment of \$12.9 million will have protected a total 8,391 acres in 12 of Maine's 16 Counties
- Voter approval for LMF will help Maine's at a critical time in our history. Since 1945, Maine has lost 2.7 million acres of farmland to development and abandonment. Maine cannot afford to lose more farms or farmland from its agricultural sector. With a generation of farmers retiring in the next 10 years and only half of the 1.5 million farmland acres remaining as open, tillable land; LMF strengthens the farmer's case for more public investment in our State's traditional agricultural economy.
- The number one production risk to farmers in Maine is lack of water. 37% of crop loss in Maine is due to drought. Farmers lost over \$35 million dollars in crops during the droughts from 1999-2002. Question 4 will allocate \$1.5 million to the State's **Agricultural Water Source Development Grant** program. This program has been very successful to date – past State investment of \$2.9 million increased protection against drought for more than 8000 acres of farmland that produce over \$12 million dollars in crop value. This is particularly important to the plants and animals that depend on our streams and are all the more vulnerable when stream habitats are stressed by low water.