



NEWS RELEASE

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Bipartisan Support Builds to Renew Land for Maine's Future Funding

AUGUSTA, Maine, February 6, 2007—Democratic and Republican leaders in the Maine Legislature announced their support today for a new bond measure to fund the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF). At a news conference in Augusta, members of the House and Senate said that continuing the state's popular land conservation program is a key priority for both parties.

House Speaker Glenn Cummings (D-Portland) said, "As development pressures mount all over the state, we need healthy funding for LMF to keep our special places as they are. Our tourism industry, and the quality of life that attracts businesses to Maine, both depend on our foresight in protecting our land and water resources. LMF is an important investment in our economy."

In the past 20 years, the Land for Maine's Future Program has conserved 445,000 acres, 973 miles of shoreline, 158 miles of snowmobile trails, and 30 boat launch sites. LMF has guaranteed public access to some of Maine's most cherished places and leveraged \$126 million in private and federal matching funds. LMF bonds have won voter approval in 1987, 1999, and 2005, but the program is currently out of funds for new projects.

Several bills to authorize bond funding for LMF have been introduced in the legislature, ranging from \$40 million to \$95 million over the next few years. Advocates say the need for LMF funding is \$25 million per year.

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Representative Patrick S.A. Flood (R-Winthrop), said, “I am sponsoring a bond proposal for Land for Maine's Future because history has shown that the people of Maine believe it's important to acquire ownership or long term rights in special places when there is a willing seller for those places. These acquisitions provide a wide range of public benefits to many generations. The LMF program staff and board are excellent facilitators and I know that they will ensure that these funds are used efficiently and wisely for Maine.”

Senate Majority Leader Elizabeth Mitchell (D-Vassalboro) noted the popularity of LMF with the state's residents. “Given the overwhelming support voters have shown for this program, and all that LMF has accomplished, I enthusiastically support sending them another land bond this year,” she said. “For every dollar Maine has spent on LMF since 2000, we've received four dollars in matching funds from private donations and federal agencies.”

Senator Karl W. Turner (R-Cumberland) said that supporting LMF is an easy decision for him. “In southern Maine, sprawl is an everyday threat. We only have a limited window of opportunity to protect some of our nicest areas from being closed off or developed. Keeping these places open to the public is a chief concern, and that's what LMF was designed for. We can't afford to let a backlog of projects build up without adequate funding, or these places could be lost for good. I join my colleagues in voicing support for LMF.”

The Maine Land Coalition is a group of conservation organizations and businesses formed to endorse a multi-year bond for LMF. Sam Hodder, senior project manager at The Trust for Public Land, is part of the coalition. He said, “It's very encouraging to see legislators from both parties making this early commitment to LMF. With LMF out of money, much of the urgent conservation work in the state can't be accomplished.”

Added Bruce Kidman of The Nature Conservancy, another Coalition member, “No matter where we live or what we believe, the Land for Maine's Future Program is one of the few things that pulls us together. Consistently and for 20 years now, Maine citizens have been telling their leaders that this is at the top of their priorities.”

Recent conservation projects that have been accomplished with LMF funding include the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in New Gloucester, Sebago Headwaters Preserve in Bridgton, Schoodic Bog in Sullivan, additions to Camden Hills State Park and hundreds of miles of new snowmobile trails in Aroostook County. Access sites have been purchased to the Sebec River in Milo, Messalonskee Lake in Sidney and Prong Pond in Greenville, while farms have been protected in places like Sanford, Poland and South Berwick.

The Land for Maine's Future Program was created in 1987 in response to concerns over the loss of critical natural areas, wildlife habitat and farmland along with traditional access to undeveloped lands for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. To date, the Land for Maine's Future Program has protected more than 445,000 acres of Maine's best recreational and natural areas. The program also seeks to conserve farmlands through the purchase of development rights and to protect public access to water for fishing, boating, and commercial marine activities. To learn more visit <http://www.state.me.us/spo/lmf>.

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