

## News Release

### **Joined by Governor Janet Mills, Bipartisan Land Conservation Task Force Announces 2019 Recommendations**

**AUGUSTA** – Joined by Governor Janet Mills, Maine’s bipartisan Land Conservation Task Force announced six broad recommendations, corresponding legislation, and other action items to encourage land trusts, philanthropists, municipalities, and partners to improve private conservation and land stewardship. The diverse 20-member group which includes the Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Senator Cathy Breen (D-Cumberland County) and Representative Patrick Corey (R-Windham) among others met for the first time in 2018.

“We are faced with a pressing need to revitalize Maine’s land conservation efforts and ensure that we meet the future needs of Maine people throughout the state,” shared **Task Force Co-Chair and Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine Executive Director David Trahan**. “To face this challenge, the Task Force brought together a wide range of interests, including natural resource-based industry representatives; sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts; public health practitioners and others improving the quality of life in Maine communities; and economic development specialists working to make Maine a more attractive place to live, work, start a business, and raise a family.”

“The Task Force conducted research, heard from dozens of experts and received hundreds of public comments which together provided a clear call for urgent action to address threats to Maine's economic future and quality of life,” added **Task Force Co-Chair and Maine Coast Heritage Trust President Tim Glidden**. “We heard about rising development pressures, a massive generational transition of Maine’s farms and woodlands, loss of public access for traditional recreational uses, and the need to ensure Maine's natural heritage is available for all citizens regardless of economic circumstance or physical ability.”

The Task Force report’s call to action is divided into six broad recommendations that recognize the diverse conservation challenges facing the state. These challenges include:

- Taking proper care of those lands already conserved including Maine’s State Parks,
- Increasing opportunities for Maine people to connect with the land for recreational and economic benefits,
- Reviving the State’s commitment to the Land for Maine’s Future program,
- Proving additional support to private landowners who graciously allow the public to access their properties
- Strengthening efforts to protect critical natural resources in a changing climate, and
- Enhancing land conservation benefits to the state’s economy and local communities.

“The Conservation Task Force has done a remarkable job of bringing together people from different perspectives, political parties, and constituencies to develop a clear road map for future conservation activities in Maine,” **commented Maine Governor Janet Mills**. “My administration will review the recommendations closely and I look forward to working with the Task Force on our shared vision of protecting Maine’s natural resources, public parks, and recreation so every generation can experience the beauty of our state.”

The Task Force Report’s recommendations include many action items that encourage land trusts, philanthropists, municipalities, and other partners to improve upon the state’s proud tradition of private conservation and land stewardship. In addition, the Task Force Report recommends the passage of specific legislation this year in Augusta.

“A bipartisan group of 104 of my colleagues in both chambers recently joined me by co-sponsoring legislation recommended in the report,” **explained Task Force Member and State Senator Cathy Breen (Democrat – Cumberland County)**. “LD 911 is a bond proposal that would ask Maine voters this November to invest in the Land for Maine’s Future Program and in our State Park system to ensure increased and improved access to the outdoors for hunters, hikers, snowmobilers, and other outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and abilities.”

The Land for Maine’s Future Program (LMF) has been supported by Maine voters on six previous occasions, most recently in 2012. While much land conservation has occurred in Maine over the past few decades, the state continues to lag the region and other parts of the country when it comes to public and conserved lands. LD 911 would re-energize the LMF program and ensure the state continues to support local, community, and statewide efforts to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities and protect areas vital to Maine’s fishing, farming, and forestry industries.

At the same time, Maine’s existing conservation lands need improvements. The Task Force heard testimony indicating a \$50 million backlog in infrastructure repairs in Maine’s State Park system. LD 911 would invest critical dollars to modernize and improve infrastructure in our state parks, which in recent years have enjoyed record attendance figures.

“With support from other Task Force members, I have sponsored LD 649 and LD 650, two bills designed to strengthen the state’s Landowner Relations program,” **added Task Force Member and State Representative Patrick Corey (Republican – Windham)**. “Much of the public’s outdoor recreational activities occur on private property, nearly 94% of Maine, yet there is much more we should be doing to assist these generous private landowners – improvements to the Landowners Relations Program is a great place to start.”

To read the Task Force’s full report: <https://www.maineconservationtaskforce.com/>

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