

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2016

The Honorable Jason Weller
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independent Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Weller:

We are writing in support of an application submitted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Maine to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The organization's proposal, titled the "Maine Aquatic Connectivity Restoration Project," aims to improve stream habitat and private road networks critical to the state's forest economy in northern and eastern Maine. The project would support technical and financial assistance for such efforts through establishment of partnerships with timberland owners.

If funded, this partnership initiative would identify 500 of the highest-priority stream crossings primarily in Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington counties, and work with landowners to provide direct assistance for stream restoration work, including culvert and bridge installation or upgrades to existing structures. Best management practices in Maine support the installation of properly sized fish-friendly passages to reduce habitat fragmentation and ensure road stability.

Through this project, TNC proposes to restore more than 100 miles of brooks, streams, and rivers, including those that provide critical habitat for Atlantic salmon and other fish populations and aquatic organisms. In addition to its restoration benefits, according to TNC, these improvements would increase road stability and safety, reduce wood harvest and hauling costs, and more quickly move wood fiber to market, while also creating short-term construction jobs.

Thank you for your time and effort on behalf of The Nature Conservancy and its partners. We respectfully request your careful consideration of this application, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please notify Katie Seelen (Collins) at (202) 224-2523, Adam Lachman (King) at (202) 224-5344, and Sam Warren (Poliquin) at (207) 784-0768 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator


Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress