

# 2025 Public Policy

The first few months of 2025 have been challenging, but land conservation advocates continue to find ways to promote legislation that supports the work of land trusts and oppose policies that undermine it. Here are some highlights:

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## NEWS FROM AUGUSTA

### **Seeking New LMF Funds**

The Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) has spent or obligated nearly all \$40 million the legislature appropriated in 2021. This session, there are three bills seeking to invest at least \$10 million/year in LMF over the next two years, providing three options for policymakers to consider. As the legislature finalizes spending in June, stay tuned for how you can support this effort.

### **Improving "Conservation Lands Registry"**

MCHT is working with state agencies to streamline the conservation lands registry, an annual requirement that has grown too cumbersome. Through LD 1072, we are working to eliminate the current system and, instead, require land trusts to include their property interests in the state's GIS conservation lands dataset. If enacted, this simplification would occur over the next year.

### **Updating Open Space Tax Law**

MCHT, The Nature Conservancy, and Maine Audubon are leading an effort to update the state's Open Space current use tax law (LD 1630) to encourage more landowners to enroll their lands. Proposed changes include increasing property tax savings for basic open space. In addition, the legislation would reward landowners who improve wildlife habitat and sequester carbon.

### **Supporting Tribal Nations**

Many Maine land trusts are backing a variety of bills promoted by the Wabanaki Alliance. There are three proposals of high priority: a bill to prohibit state use of eminent domain on tribal lands (LD 958), a proposal to ensure Wabanaki Tribes have access to federal laws (LD 395), and legislation to enact remaining recommended changes to Maine's Indian Claims Settlement Act (LD 785).

### **Defending Land Conservation**

Land trusts have had to play defense on a few proposals this session. Earlier this spring, we defeated a bill to cap public lands in Maine. Later this session, land trusts will be partnering with the Maine Association of Nonprofits to oppose legislation that targets property tax exemption.

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Conservation groups continue to follow developments in our nation's capital, as the new administration seeks to rescind approved grants, eliminate agency staff, and create uncertainty. MCHT has been gathering information and sharing concerns with our congressional offices.

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## **More Information**

Contact MCHT Public Policy Director Jeff Romano with policy-related questions ([jromano@mcht.org](mailto:jromano@mcht.org))