

# 2026 Maine State House Highlights

Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Maine Land Trust Network (MLTN) members from across the state have been busy in Augusta this year.

## Dedicated LMF Funding!

MCHT, TNC, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Maine Farmland Trust, Forest Society of Maine, and MLTN member land trusts led the effort to establish, for the first time, on-going, dedicated funding for **Land for Maine's Future (LMF)**. We worked with Democratic Senate Majority Leader Teresa Pierce, Republican Senator Russell Black, Governor Janet Mills, and others to get the proposal over the finish line. Beginning this July, the state will be depositing 25% of the investment income generated on the state's Budget Stabilization Fund into the LMF Trust Fund. We are expecting more than \$7.5 million in year one, which runs from July 2026 to June 2027.



## Ensuring Wabanaki Access to Conservation Easement Law

MCHT, TNC, and Democratic Representative Jim Dill worked with the Wabanaki Alliance to enact **LD 1054**, a bill to ensure our state's conservation easement statute more explicitly applies to tribal governments and can be used to protect tribal interests, including the protection of archeological and cultural values. The proposal enjoyed unanimous support in the legislature before the Governor signed it into law.



## Defending Property Tax Exemption

Policymakers from both parties continue to view nonprofits and land trusts as unfair burdens on taxpayers. Working with the Maine Association of Nonprofits, MCHT is closely watching the Legislature's two-year **Real Estate Property Tax Relief Task Force** to make sure the taxing of land trusts or other nonprofits does not become a scapegoat solution to address rising property taxes.

## Housing, Tribal Sovereignty, and More

- Land trusts supported a Maine Municipal Association, GrowSmart Maine, and regional planner led campaign to improve housing legislation enacted in 2025. Through passage of **LD 2173** local communities will regain important tools to more effectively balance housing construction with natural resource protection and other community needs, especially outside of designated growth areas.
- MCHT and TNC backed legislation, approved by policymakers, will provide the Bureau of Parks and Lands more than \$2 million to address a budget shortfall that threatened to impact the management of more than 640,000 acres of public lands.
- Many land trusts once again testified in support of tribal sovereignty. While this effort came up short once again, there are encouraging signs of success for 2027.
- Multiple attempts to secure funding for farmland conservation, through both a bond issue as well as the use of unclaimed bottle bill deposits, failed to be enacted.