



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
353 WATER STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA ME 04333-0041



January 30, 2023

Bruce A. Van Note
Commissioner
Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: Support Letter for Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and Maine Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) Application to the USDOT FY2022 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert AOP Program)

Dear Commissioner Van Note,

The Fisheries Division of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) is writing in support of MaineDOT's and MDMR's funding request to the Culvert AOP Program for replacement of road stream culverts across the watersheds of the endangered Atlantic salmon Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in Maine. These crossings are undersized and impact passage of native migratory, nonmigratory fish, and other aquatic organisms, disrupt natural ecological processes, and cause ongoing maintenance and repair problems for local communities. Many of these culvert reconstruction projects are also important in providing habitat connectivity for Maine's unique assemblage of nonmigratory native coldwater fish, and their replacement will aid in the conservation and management of these and other native fauna.

Atlantic salmon are ranked as a highest priority species in the Maine State Wildlife Action Plan list of species of Greatest Conservation Need. Increasing and enhancing connectivity between ocean and freshwater habitats is important to this and other anadromous species. Recovery relies on identifying and replacing key barriers to fish passage along Maine's transportation corridors. The road stream crossings included in this Culvert AOP application are located within federally designated critical habitat for Atlantic Salmon. Collectively, these projects would contribute to restoring access to thousands of acres of habitat important to the life cycles of Atlantic salmon and anadromous prey species, as well as for important coldwater fisheries.

The MDIFW supports the projects included in this Culvert AOP application provide access to habitat available for endangered, anadromous Atlantic salmon, facultative and prey species, as well as native resident fish and wildlife species that are managed by the MDIFW. MDIFW will continue to be a strong partner and collaborator with MaineDOT and MDMR on connectivity projects to ensure state agency interests are supported in a responsible and thoughtful manner.

Sincerely,

Francis Brautigam
Director of Fisheries & Hatcheries
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife