

# LD 2141: PROVIDE CRITICAL FUNDING FOR MAINE'S LAKES AND FARMLAND

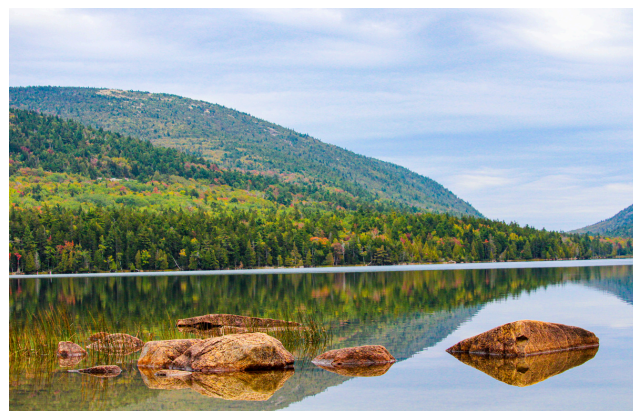
Maine lakes and farmland need sustained funding to protect them against growing threats and pressure.

**Farmland protection and lake restoration are two of Maine's most pressing and dire natural resource priorities.**

- Maine lakes and farmland are vital to our state. Healthy lakes support our outdoor recreation economy, municipal tax bases, drinking water supplies, and scenic landscape. Farmland is an important part of Maine's heritage, local food supply, and rural economy.
- Without action and increased funding for conservation measures, development pressures will cause a further degradation of Maine lakes and a continued loss of farmland and farming operations across the state.
- Less than 5 percent of Maine's farmland is currently protected, and the 2022 Census of Agriculture showed that between 2017 and 2022 more than 82,000 acres of farmland in Maine fell out of agricultural production. At the same time, a growing number of lakes in Maine face threats of large-scale algal blooms that require very expensive, targeted restoration actions.

**Maine needs a sustained funding mechanism to effectively address the existential crises facing lakes and farmland.**

- Maine has clear statutory mandates to protect lakes and farmland, widespread public support to do so, and a well-documented, increasing need.
- The best way to advance farmland protection and lake restoration efforts in Maine is to dedicate a sustained funding mechanism for proven state programs, like the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund and Working Farmland Access and Protection Program.



*Fall day on Jordan Pond (Hannah Somers)*

**Unclaimed bottle deposits can provide the sustained funding Maine needs to promote the health and protection of lakes and farmland.**

- Every year in Maine, an estimated \$10 to \$17 million in bottle deposits go unclaimed. Unlike in other states who use unclaimed bottle deposit funds to serve a public purpose, those funds remain with beverage companies.
- This bill would have directed a portion of Maine's unclaimed beverage container deposits toward lake restoration and farmland protection; however, it was amended to prioritize ensuring Maine has good data on unclaimed bottle deposits, imposing stricter reporting standards and enforcement.
- This will serve as an important first step for accountability and transparency, paving the way for the unclaimed funds to serve the public good in the future.



**Conserve Maine lakes and farmland for generations to come.**

For more information, please contact:

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# Environmental Priorities Coalition

Maine's **Environmental Priorities Coalition** is an inclusive statewide alliance of 40 conservation, climate action, and public health organizations. Each year we collectively identify a slate of policy priorities to act on the climate crisis, further environmental justice, protect land, water, and wildlife, and cultivate healthy Maine communities.



Conservation Law Foundation



Friends of Casco Bay Casco BAYKEEPER

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