

Jan 28, 2022 – Kennebec Highlands project meets major milestone, selected for new Land for Maine's Future (LMF) funding

A historic Kennebec Highlands project has been selected to receive state funding as one of five major Land for Maine's Future (LMF) conservation projects of statewide significance. Decades of broad support by communities, outdoor enthusiasts, countless individuals, businesses, the state of Maine, 7 Lakes Alliance and its predecessor Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance, among many others, helped make this major milestone possible.

LMF ensures public access to the state's natural assets, such as waters, working lands, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, and lands for recreation. These projects were the first to be selected by the LMF board since the program received \$40 million in new state funding last year.



Project partners 7 Lakes Alliance and Maine Department of Agriculture, and Forestry's Bureau of Public Lands (BPL) announced that the project will conserve an additional 813 acres of high priority recreational and ecological lands in the towns of Vienna and New Sharon. Acquisition of these iconic lands has been a priority since the inception of the Kennebec Highlands in 1998. The project will fill in the largest remaining gap in the Highlands. This opportunity grew from a 25-year relationship between project partners and the landowner, commercial blueberry producer Allen's Blueberry Freezer, Inc., and now George C. Allen Property Trust. According to Roy Allen, the owners have long observed the public's desire to hunt, bird watch, hike, pick blueberries, enjoy the views and otherwise enjoy these unique lands. "We are pleased to be a small part in allowing this land to continue to be a source of enjoyment to so many."

The land features the summit of Vienna Mountain, visible from points throughout the region, with 360-degree views and expansive blueberry fields for commercial and recreational picking. The Highlands are the divide between the Kennebec and Androscoggin River watersheds, and with this project, encompasses several thousand acres of conserved lands that provide expanded public access for outdoor activities, such as, fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, mountain biking, running, skiing, snowmobiling, berry picking and horseback riding. This LMF funding is a major milestone in the process that will help 7 Lakes Alliance and Maine BPL to complete this acquisition. 7 Lakes Alliance looks forward to working in a collaborative process to help shape the future of this land.

**Thank you to all
involved!**