Endless Lake, Howland, by Beth Comeau

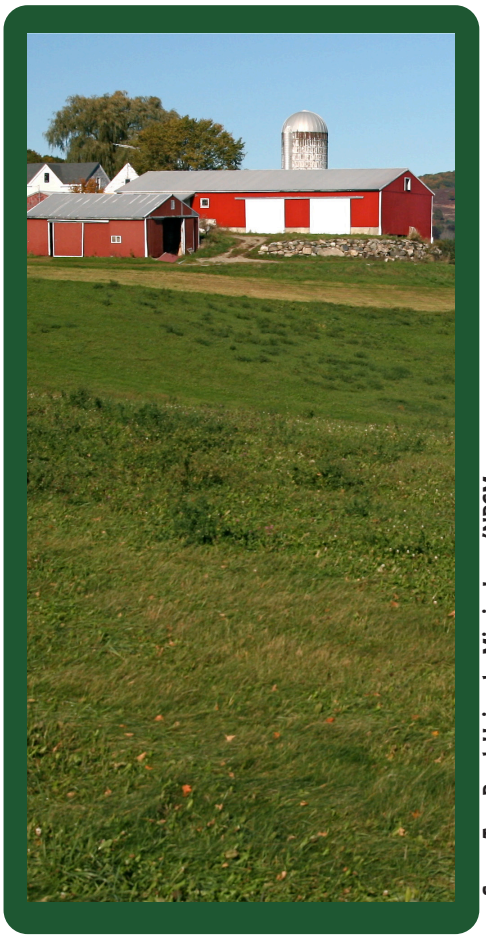
Support Conservation of Lakes and Farmland

Vote YES on the Majority OTP-A Report on LD 2141

The Legislature has an opportunity this year to protect the water quality of our lakes and the long-term viability of farmland. The Majority Report on LD 2141 follows the lead of other states with beverage container redemption programs (Bottle Bills) where unclaimed bottle deposits are invested in high-priority conservation programs.

Maine Lakes and Farmland Face Significant Threats

- Healthy lakes support our economy, public drinking water supplies, and quality of life. Farmland is an important part of Maine's heritage, local food supply, and rural towns.
- Less than five percent of farmland is protected – the lowest of any New England state. More than 82,000 acres fell out of production between 2017 and 2022.
- A growing number of lakes face threats of devastating algal blooms that can have serious environmental and economic impacts.



Seven Tree Pond, Union, by MissingLynx/NRCM

Sustained Funding Needed to Protect Lakes & Farmlands

- Maine has clear statutory mandates to protect lakes and farmland, widespread public support to do so, and a well-documented, increasing need.
- Without increased funding for conservation measures, development pressures will cause further degradation of lake water quality and a continued loss of working farms across the state.
- LD 2141 responds to this need with ongoing funding that can help ensure that economically viable farms and clean lakes are passed on to future generations.

Following the Lead of Other States that Invest Unclaimed Deposits in Conservation

- According to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, nearly $17 million in beverage container deposits go unclaimed every year in Maine.

(Over)

- Other states with Bottle Bill programs use unclaimed deposits to support conservation programs, including:
    - **Vermont:** 100% of unclaimed deposits go to the VT Clean Water Fund
    - **Massachusetts:** 100% of unclaimed deposits go to the MA Clean Environment Fund
    - **Michigan:** 75% of unclaimed deposits go to the MI Cleanup & Redevelopment Fund
    - **New York:** $23 million annually goes to the NY Environmental Protection Program

Broad Statewide Support for Protecting Lakes and Farmland

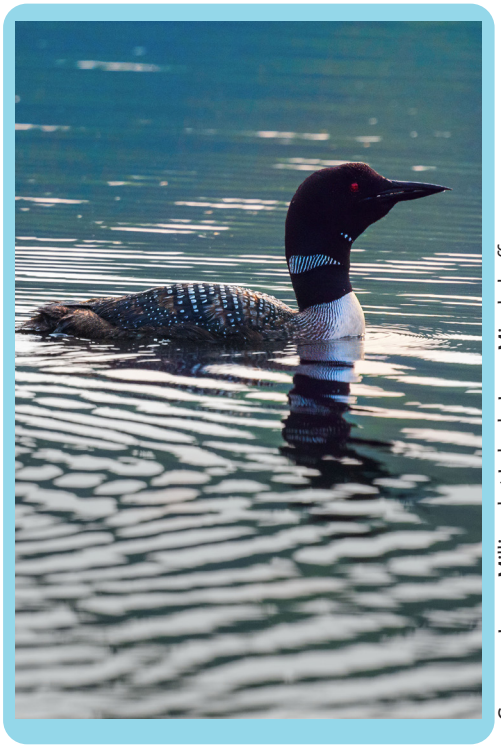
LD 2141 has received overwhelming public support in testimony from lake associations, farmers, nonprofits, and water districts:

"We, 78 farmers representing 48 farm businesses from across Maine, ask you to support the conservation of Maine's finite and critical working agricultural land by directing a portion of unclaimed beverage container deposits in the state to funding farmland conservation." – Shared by **Maine Farmland Trust**

"State funding is currently inadequate to meet the needs of lakes across maine. Passing LD 2141 will strengthen community-state partnerships to monitor, protect, and restore our valuable lake resources for the benefit of all Maine people." – **Maine Lake Protection Coalition Steering Committee** and 1,262 signatories statewide

"LD 2141 will benefit farms and lakes across the state, protecting these vital resources for generations to come. The 41 organizations in the EPC urge you to vote yes on LD 2141." – Sarah Woodbury, on behalf of the **Maine Environmental Priorities Coalition**

How LD 2141 Would Work


Common Loon, Millinocket Lake, byLarry Mingledorff

Lake Protection: Provides $2 million annually to the existing Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund to support activities including:

- Lake water quality monitoring through funding for lab costs, equipment, and other support costs.
- Matching grants to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) like nature-based shoreline stabilization projects and other local pollution reduction efforts.
- Regional lake protection investments that build local capacity and provide technical assistance and education.
- Alum treatment grants to restore seriously impaired lakes.
- Increased enforcement of local laws that protect lake water quality.

Farmland Protection: Provides $2 million annually to the existing Working Farmland Access and Protection Program to support:

- The purchase of agricultural easements that protect productive and economically significant agricultural lands.
- Proposals for available funding would be ranked using criteria on agricultural soils, existing infrastructure, local significance, development pressure, and other factors.