



News Release

February 4, 2008

For Immediate Release

Contact

Kerry Crisley, The Nature Conservancy
617-227-7017 ext 316, kcrisley@tnc.org
Mark Berry, Downeast Lakes Land Trust
207-796-2100, mberrydllt@earthlink.net

White House Calls for \$3.45 Million in Forest Legacy Funds for Upper Machias River and Wabassus Lake Forests

Bangor, Maine – Maine’s Machias River Project tops President Bush’s funding request for the Forest Legacy Program in Funding Year 2009. It is also one of only three Forest Legacy proposals to make it into the budget document that signals the beginning of Congressional deliberation on all FY09 funding decisions. The President’s budget request ranks Phase III of the Machias River Project as the nation’s highest priority for Forest Legacy funding, requesting \$3.45 million to protect forests in the upper Machias River and Downeast Lakes region of Maine. Forty-five states had submitted a total of 87 proposed projects totaling over \$200 million. The other projects included come from California and Minnesota.

“There is no way Maine could achieve this level of success in Forest Legacy year after year without the dedication of our entire Congressional delegation,” said Mike Tetreault, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in Maine. “From its inception, the Machias River project has been a shared vision between local residents, industry, private and public interests.”

The collaborative effort is protecting ecological, recreational and economic values of the entire river system. Phase III of the Machias River Project builds upon the nationally recognized success of Phases I and II, the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership, and other forest conservation successes in Downeast Maine. The project involves the purchase of easements totaling 33,800 acres on two tracts of land separated by Third Machias Lake. To the west is the 27,164-acre Washington Bald Mountain Tract and to the east is the 6,644-acre Wabassus Lake Tract.

“The Wabassus Lake Tract will be a wonderful addition to our Farm Cove Community Forest,” said Mark Berry, Executive Director of Downeast Lakes Land Trust, “We are excited by this acknowledgement of the importance of protecting its spectacular undeveloped lakeshores and scenic hillside forests, and guaranteeing that public access will continue.”

MORE

The project, a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) and the Maine Department of Conservation, was unanimously ranked as Maine's highest priority for Forest Legacy funding this year. If Congress approves the funding, the Maine Department of Conservation will acquire working forest conservation easements on the Washington Bald Mountain and Wabassus Lake tracts.

These forests fill gaps between protected lands and have outstanding conservation values, including lakefront, streams, and diverse wetlands and wildlife habitats. With the addition of the Phase III easements' protection, more than 88% of the upper Machias watershed will be secured from development. Sustainable forest management and public access will be ensured on these lands. In all, 452,196 acres of conservation land will be linked in the U.S., abutting 914,673 acres of Crown Land in Canada, yielding a contiguous protected area of over 1.3 million acres. This project will anchor public and private investments and sustain the timber industry and recreational tourism.

In addition to its work to secure the easements, Downeast Lakes Land Trust also has signed a sales option agreement to acquire the fee ownership of the Wabassus Lake Tract and manage it for wildlife habitat, public recreation, and sustainable forestry. DLLT has formed the Wabassus Lake Project Committee to oversee a \$3.2 million capital campaign to cover costs associated with acquiring and managing the property

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between the United States Forest Service (USFS), state governments and private landowners that identifies and protects ecologically important forest habitat that is threatened by possible development or unsustainable practices. Program objectives are met through land acquisition or the use of conservation easements, which protect working forests while meeting important conservation goals. Since its first appropriations in Fiscal Year 1992, the Forest Legacy Program has conserved more than one and a half million acres across 35 states and territories. This year the President has requested \$12.5 million for the Forest Legacy Program, compared with \$60 million in FY07 and \$30 million in FY08. In FY08, Congress appropriated \$59,817,000 to the program. The Bush Administration's Forest Legacy Program budget is part of the larger Fiscal Year 2009 funding bill for the Department of the Interior and the USFS.

Maine has successfully used the Forest Legacy Program to conserve more than 700,000 acres of working forest lands. Maine's projects have consistently ranked among the top national Forest Legacy priorities.

###

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org.

Downeast Lakes Land Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the Downeast Lakes region through the conservation and exemplary management of its forests and waters. Its 27,080-acre Farm Cove Community Forest includes the Fourth Machias Lake Ecological Reserve and other forestland sustainably managed for wildlife habitat, forest products, and public recreation. Visit us in Grand Lake Stream or at www.downeastlakes.org.