

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 4, 2020

Chief Matthew Lohr
USDA, NRCS, Office of the Chief
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 5105-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Lohr:

We write to our express our support for the Portland Water District's application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for their proposal titled, "Sebago Clean Waters: Watershed Protection Investment Program."

The Portland Water District (PWD) is applying on behalf of the nine-member Sebago Clean Waters (SCW) partnership, of which PWD is a member. This partnership seeks to protect the forested watershed of Sebago Lake. The partnership's goal is to conserve 25 percent of the Sebago Lake forestland, or 35,000 more acres, in order to promote sustainable stewardship of the watershed. The Lake provides drinking water for over 200,000 people, serving one-sixth of Maine's population and Maine's fastest growing businesses. Conservation in the watershed is extremely important, as this will allow PWD to continue to provide clean water without the need to construct a filtration plant, resulting in a substantial cost saving to customers. Additionally, the watershed supports forestry jobs, outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat.

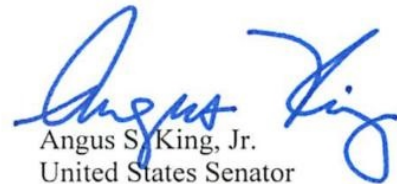
With PWD as lead partner, SCW has proposed an \$8 million RCPP-Alternative Funding Arrangement investment—which will leverage another \$10.5 million from partners—for a holistic watershed program to protect the water quality, among the many other benefits in the Sebago Lake watershed. With an NRCS investment, SCW plans to work with landowners, municipalities, and businesses to protect 10,000 acres of forest, and goals of the project include to improve fish passage, restore wetlands, and improve forest management. An investment from NRCS, combined with SCW's business sustainability partnership program, will allow SCW to sustain its vision for linking downstream water users with the upstream landowners who own and manage this important watershed.

Thank you for your time on behalf of the Portland Water District. We request the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's careful consideration of this proposal, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that your staff please notify [REDACTED] when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator