



March 5, 2019

54 Portsmouth Street
Concord, NH 03301

Tel. 603.224.9945
Fax 603.228.0423

info@forestsociety.org
www.forestsociety.org

The Honorable Martha Fuller Clark, Chair
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
State House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 74, legislation designed to increase the available funding to support the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). As you know, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) was a backer of the program's formation in 2000 and of the establishment of the fee which sustains the program's operations. In addition, we have also received grants from LCHIP which have been integral to our mission of protecting the state's landscapes and working forests. For that, we are deeply appreciative.

Over the last eighteen years, LCHIP has successfully carried out its goals of protecting the significant lands, historic buildings, and cultural resources that uniquely define New Hampshire. The sheer numbers bear out this impact. It has awarded 466 grants in 163 communities across the state. Equally noteworthy is how the program can incentivize financial support from other sources. In fact, every dollar from LCHIP leverages \$5.75 in additional funding.

Furthermore, as you know, tourism and outdoor recreation are key components of New Hampshire's economic strength. LCHIP's role in protecting the places which draw tourists here contributes to this vitality. Building on that point is an economic analysis the Trust for Public Land conducted of the return on New Hampshire's investment in land conservation through a variety of state programs, including LCHIP. This study found that every \$1 invested in land conservation returned \$11 in natural goods and services to the New Hampshire economy. What is perhaps most important, but admittedly harder to measure, is the sense of pride in those communities which have been awarded grants. If you have ever attended LCHIP's annual grant award announcement, you have observed the excitement and pride grantees express when their project is announced.

However, there is an unmet need for LCHIP funding. Since 2009 LCHIP has been able to make grants to 328 of 505 competitive applications submitted. Increasing the \$25 recording fee to \$35 will provide an additional \$1.5 million a year to the present resource pool of \$3.5 million. We think New Hampshire's natural and cultural resources are worth this additional investment.

It is important to note that SB 74 does not relax LCHIP's rigorous standards for awarding its competitive grants. Rather, it will increase the capacity for communities to leverage more local contributions of dollars and equity. The result is more conservation of lands and historic buildings that are community cornerstones. Such an outcome supports the road map for New Hampshire future in 2050 LCHIP's Board has envisioned.

In closing, we would urge the Committee to recommend SB 74 as Ought to Pass. Thank you again for this opportunity to share our views with you.

Sincerely,

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Manager
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests