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Testimony in Support of LD 894, An Act To Increase Funding for the Youth Conservation Corps

Garrison Beck, Director of Water Conservation, Midcoast Conservancy

March 22, 2017

Senator Saviello, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Garrison Beck and I am the Director of Water Conservation for Midcoast Conservancy. Midcoast Conservancy's mission is to protect and promote healthy lands, waters, and communities through conservation, outdoor adventure, and learning. We work in the lands and waters surrounding the Sheepscot River and Damariscotta Lake, from Wiscasset to Montville. We are supported by 1,600 members who live throughout midcoast and central Maine and beyond.

I am testifying today in support of LD 894, An Act To Increase Funding for the Youth Conservation Corps. Midcoast Conservancy operates a Youth Conservation Corps program and benefitted from a bill in the 127th Legislature to provide funding to these programs.

Quite simply, these Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) programs provide real-world training in technical careers to Maine's youth while protecting valuable water resources. YCC programs are all based on a simple model. Young workers are hired, typically between the ages of 16 and 20 to staff the program. These workers are supervised by young experts who are typically under the age of 30 and together they constitute a Youth Conservation Corps. The goal of a YCC program is to identify and assist landowners in correcting erosion issues caused by runoff, which ultimately pollutes streams, rivers, and lakes. In order to create an incentive for landowners to address these issues, YCC programs typically offer their labor at no or low costs.

In addition to the measurable benefits to water quality of eliminating these sources of pollution, Youth Conservation Corps programs have very real, long lasting benefits to the youth who choose to work in these demanding jobs. These jobs expose Maine's youth to actual real-world experiences using aspects

of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). These jobs are not only teaching young adults the value of teamwork and our natural resources, but also training them for their future careers in college and beyond.

Maine's Youth Conservation Corps programs have been incredibly successful. Following is a summary of the 2016 summer season, by the numbers:

- 50 employees across 7 organizations
- \$238,290 total cost of programs fueling the local economy
- 362 Best Management Practices installed at 156 work sites
- Projects completed on 33 lakes in 30 different towns

Your support of this bill will support Maine's youth, giving them experience in much-needed STEM careers, it will support Maine's economy with over \$230,000 in local spending each year, and it will support Maine's public water resources by keeping our waters clean, in turn supporting our natural resource economy. I believe we can all support this fundamental work, and I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Garrison".

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