

MAINE TIES

NEWS FROM THE MAINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2026



Together

Strengthening communities
through collaboration

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



At the Maine Community Foundation (MaineCF), we know the greatest progress happens when we work together. Partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of everything we do because lasting change is

built through relationships: neighbors helping neighbors, organizations joining forces and donors investing in the communities and causes they care about. In a word, community.

The following pages share just a few examples of how people are coming together to address local challenges, strengthen opportunities and create brighter futures for all Maine people.

You'll read about a small, local news outlet that was saved from closure by members of its engaged community. You'll meet donors and a financial advisor who partner with MaineCF to collectively make a greater impact. And you'll feel inspired by the stories of Maine entrepreneurs

and innovators of all ages, who are given the opportunity to pitch their ideas at a statewide startup challenge.

You'll also read about financial advisor JB Sullivan, who reflects on his three-decade partnership with the foundation as a longtime member of the Investment Committee and as an advisor to MaineCF fundholders.

It is these collaborations driving positive change in all corners of the state. Thank you for being part of these efforts. We invite you to reach out to learn more about our partnerships. After all, "community" is our middle name.

With appreciation,

Deborah Ellwood
President & CEO

ON THE COVER

Bomazeen Land Trust, a community-led, intertribal initiative, enables Indigenous people to once again care for lands and waters with historical, spiritual and ecological significance.

Bomazeen Land Trust photo

The Maine Community Foundation brings people and resources together to build a better Maine. To learn more about the foundation, visit www.maineCF.org



Natural Resources Council of Maine photo

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Maine
Community Foundation



Preble Street in downtown Portland provides an array of barrier-free services to empower people experiencing homelessness, housing, and food insecurity and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these problems. Bob and Susie Peixotto of Yarmouth support Preble Street through their donor-advised fund at MaineCF. *Preble Street photo*

Giving Together

Partnering with MaineCF helps donors make a difference

Five years ago Bob and Susie Peixotto received a recommendation to set up a donor-advised fund through MaineCF and decided to do so.

It enhanced how they give back to the Maine community by allowing them to easily direct their giving to causes that align with their values and passions. They support a range of organizations, including social service agencies and programs that provide healthcare as well as access to the outdoors.

“We want Maine to be a beautiful, healthy place where people can have access to the food they need, health care and the mental health support they need,” Bob says. “We want it to be a place where they can get outdoors and enjoy what Maine has to offer and if needed, there are resources to help them should an emergency arise.”

After working long careers in Maine – Bob spent 31 years with L.L.Bean and Susie was a teacher, EMT and licensed clinical social worker – they are now at a point in their lives where they can both volunteer and offer financial support to local nonprofits.



They are enthusiastic about supporting Maine Huts & Trails, where Bob has served on the board for 20 years, and LifeFlight of Maine, which provides critical emergency care in rural areas. They also give to Preble Street and Good Shepherd Food Bank.

“There’s much disparity between those who have resources and those who are trying to access resources,” Susie says. “We try to help bridge that gap in a small way and to make more possibilities available for people who otherwise might not have necessary resources.”

“MaineCF validates and supports our desire to give to the causes that mean so much to us.”
— MaineCF fundholder
Susie Peixotto

When something unexpected happens, like the war in Ukraine, the Peixottos turn to MaineCF for guidance about which reputable organizations and causes to support that offer the most impact.

“I always get excited when I talk to someone from MaineCF; there’s this enthusiasm because they care about increasing access for people to so many different resources,” Susie says. “MaineCF validates and supports our desire to give to the people and endeavors that mean so much to us.”



The Bicycle Coalition of Maine, a nonprofit organization that advocates for cyclist safety and bike access for all Mainers, is one organization Peter Millard and Emily Wesson support through their donor-advised fund at MaineCF. *Bicycle Coalition of Maine photo*

development and support causes that protect the safety and wellbeing of Mainers.

At the center of their giving are local land trusts, including the Orono Land Trust and Coastal Mountains Land Trust, because of the critical work they do to conserve land and preserve access.

They feel strongly about supporting groups like the Natural Resources Council of Maine that push for good environmental policies, and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, which focuses on protecting pedestrians and cyclists.

Peter is a family doctor working at the federally qualified Seaport Community Health Center and Emily is a school nurse. They support local food pantries, Habitat for Humanity, hospice care and nonprofits that provide emergency relief.

Using a donor-advised fund is easy and convenient, Peter says. Partnering with MaineCF has allowed them to focus less on logistics and more on giving with a multiplier effect. “If you can do something that promotes a more sustainable future, that has a lot of add-on benefits over the years.”



Peter Millard of Belfast uses his donor-advised fund at MaineCF to support causes he is passionate about. *Katherine Emery photo*

When Peter Millard and Emily Wesson hear about large development proposals that could forever change Maine, their thoughts often drift back to their time working in Africa.

Peter and Emily provided medical and public health development in rural Africa for eight years and often saw people “from away” making big promises that never came to fruition. They see the same dynamic in Maine, particularly in old mill towns and rural areas where developers pitch large projects that could harm natural resources.

“In Africa, outsiders come in and take advantage of the situation. Having grown up here in Maine, I see that a lot here, too,” Millard says. “We support Maine nonprofits that are trying to promote sustainable development.”

Peter and Emily direct their philanthropic giving to organizations that advocate for responsible

Living Together

Reimagined grant program supports land and water access for underserved people and places

Maine leads the nation with the amount of land preserved by land trusts. Nearly 3 million of Maine’s 22 million total acres are protected by the state’s 80-plus land trusts, according to a 2024 Maine Land Trust Network report.

Land trusts and other community-led organizations are bridging the gap between the relatively small amount of land designated for public management by the state and federal governments and land and water access for Maine people.

MaineCF’s Land for Communities grant program is working to further increase relationships to land and water for underserved communities in Maine.

The grant program, which launched in fall 2025, has two core goals: land return and land for food. Wabanaki stewardship of ancestral lands is critical to Indigenous culture, land conservation, resilience to climate change, access to healthy food and more.

Land return focuses on increasing the land held by Wabanaki nations and Wabanaki-led organizations, which helps restore the caretaking of land and water to indigenous people in Maine.

Land for food includes protecting land in rural communities used for hunting, fishing and wild food harvesting as well as land access for community agriculture or fisheries. In its first year, Land for Communities awarded a total of \$1.2 million to projects in 13 counties that supported the purchase or protection of 36,000 acres.

Land Return

The Trust for Public Land partnered with the Penobscot Nation to support the Wáhsehtəkʷ effort and the return of 30,000 acres in the Katahdin region. This is one of the largest land returns between a U.S. nonprofit and a tribal nation and is part of the broader set of tributary land return projects prioritized by First Light



Downeast Coastal Conservancy has protected 15 acres that contain Healthy Acadia’s food gardens for Downeast Restorative Harvest. The gardens are a critical source for thousands of pounds of organic produce, freely distributed each year to food-insecure families in the Downeast region. *Downeast Coastal Conservancy photo*

(see sidebar) and the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship.

Land for Communities supported this effort with a \$50,000 grant last fall.

The project allows members of the Penobscot Nation to reconnect with their ancestral land and will provide access to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

“Trust for Public Land and Penobscot Nation are so grateful to MaineCF and its donors for their efforts to advance Wabanaki land return, self-determination and sovereignty.”

— Trust for Public Land

Land return projects are not just about acres conserved. Another aspect of the program also supports projects that provide a connection to Wabanaki land. Bomazeen Land Trust, a Wabanaki-led organization, enables Indigenous people to once again care for lands and waters with historical, spiritual and ecological significance.

Over the past year, Bomazeen Land Trust was awarded \$50,000 in Land for Communities grants to maintain land it holds for cultural use. It offers programs that aim to keep Wabanaki traditions,



Wabanaki traditions like braiding sweetgrass are being kept alive with programs like those at Bomazeen Land Trust. *Bomazeen Land Trust photo*

like braiding sweetgrass, alive for generations to come. It also offers classes on traditional cooking and healing practices.

“Our outcomes focus on enabling Wabanaki people to learn about our culture, connect with our homelands, and resume our roles as caretakers of ndakinna, our homeland,” said Andrea Francis, executive director of Bomazeen Land Trust.

Land For Food

Incarcerated people and people in recovery are benefitting from fresh produce and learning life skills through Healthy Acadia’s Downeast Restorative Harvest in Washington County.

The agricultural project employs residents of the Washington County Jail to work on farmland owned by Downeast Coastal Conservancy. The produce harvested by jail residents is then used in the jail kitchen and provided to area food pantries.

Not only do incarcerated people receive benefits of fresh produce, they learn job skills they can use once they reenter the community.

A \$50,000 Land for Communities grant this spring to Downeast Coastal Conservancy supports the purchase of a 15-acre parcel in Machias for the Downeast Restorative Harvest project.



First Light Commitment

In March 2026, MaineCF’s Board of Directors signed a commitment to support Wabanaki communities and tribal governments and continue to learn alongside others as part of the First Light community.

First Light is a collective of non-native organizations and agencies working to expand Wabanaki access and stewardship of land. Two staff and one board member participated in a year-long First Light Learning Journey.

MaineCF joined First Light in 2024 and confirmed its commitment to learning and healing earlier this year. The commitment states, in part:

“MaineCF recognizes the inherent sovereignty and dignity of the Wabanaki nations...The Foundation is committed to building deeper relationships with the Wabanaki nations and using our resources to support Wabanaki communities.”

Learn more at dawnlandreturn.org.



A Harpswell Anchor photographer gives her young subject a sneak peek at the shot. The Harpswell Anchor closed its doors in fall 2020, but by the following summer, a group of dedicated residents reimagined the organization as a nonprofit news outlet. *Harpswell Anchor photo*

Learning Together

Local news keeps communities informed and engaged

When the Harpswell Anchor ceased printing in fall 2020, the closure of the 22-year-old newspaper could have been yet another casualty of the evolving media landscape that has claimed local news outlets across the state and country.

But just months later, a group of dedicated Harpswell residents decided to revive the publication as a nonprofit news outlet, a change many small, local news outlets are making across the country. By June 2021, the new Harpswell Anchor was back up and running.

MaineCF’s Community Building Grant Program was an early seed supporter of Harpswell Anchor. Now, MaineCF is strengthening local news across the state as the leader of Press Forward Maine, an initiative to reimagine, reinvest and rebuild local news.

Press Forward Maine envisions a future where every Maine resident – no matter where they live – mainecf.org

has access to the high-quality, reliable local news and information they trust and use to learn, stay connected and engaged.

“Access to accurate, nonpartisan local community news should be regarded as a mission-driven public good, just like libraries, museums, streetlights and sidewalks are.”

— Janice Thompson, Harpswell News

Carlos Barrionuevo, one of 10 Press Forward Maine advisory council members with journalism roots, says people in Maine have strong connections to their communities, which is positive for strengthening a healthy local news ecosystem.

“There is a unique opportunity within Maine to create something sustainable. There is a deep



desire for engagement and the desire to help each other is an ingrained trait here,” he says.

Barrionuevo has worked for four decades in business development and strategy for the Tribune Company and NPR and is currently director of Public Media Company, a nonprofit consulting firm that supports local media organizations.

Strong local news in Maine depends on collaboration across the media landscape and Press Forward Maine is a critical tool to convene, engage and



identify solutions for Maine’s local news outlets, he says.

Press Forward Maine is in the early stages of this work, but the advisory council has identified several pathways where it can make the biggest impact: through ecosystem research, a community news hub and policy solutions.

“If we all work together, we can create a sustainable future for local news in Maine,” Barrionuevo says.

Above left: Carlos Barrionuevo of Georgetown has had a decades-long career in the media business. Now, he is advising Press Forward Maine, MaineCF’s initiative to strengthen local news. *Brianna Soukup photo*. Above right: A Harpswell Anchor photographer interviewing a member of the community at a local event. *Harpswell Anchor photo*

Strengthening Local News through Press Forward Maine

Ecosystem Research

In partnership with the Roux Institute, Press Forward Maine is building a data-driven understanding of the local news landscape — including coverage gaps, vulnerabilities and opportunities — to guide future investment, policy efforts and collaboration.

Community News Hub

Press Forward Maine is designing a statewide Community News Hub that connects Maine college students with local news outlets to expand community reporting capacity while training the next generation of journalists.

Public Policy

Working with the Maine Press Association, Maine Broadcasters Association and Rebuild Local News, Press Forward Maine is building the infrastructure needed to advance public policy to strengthen local news.



North Spore is a startup urban mushroom farm in Portland leading the field of mycology. *North Spore/Avi Fox Photography photos*

Innovating Together

MaineCF invests in the state's next great businesses

A hobby shared by three College of the Atlantic classmates has turned into a nationally recognized business with 70 employees. Their innovative business is now a leader in the field of mycology, the study of mushrooms.

The trio made up of a mycologist, an organic farmer and a photojournalist spent their time in between classes foraging for mushrooms on Mount Desert Island. They sold their harvest to local restaurants dedicated to serving fresh ingredients. The hobby turned into a passion and then a burgeoning business. In 2014, they launched North Spore, an urban mushroom farm in Portland.

Ben Chesler of North Spore says mushrooms are an untapped resource that have myriad benefits. "Mushrooms are part of a whole kingdom that is largely unexplored. They are a true win-win-win," Chesler said. "Good for health, good for the planet and good for the bottom line."

Today, North Spore cultivates mushroom spawn kits for indoor and outdoor home garden growing

and research, as well as mushroom wellness products, including tinctures, coffee, teas and chocolate. It was named the Maine Small Business Association small business manufacturer of the year in 2025 and continues to grow.

MaineCF's commitment to investing 2% of its primary-pool portfolio in Maine-based startups is one way the foundation is supporting innovative businesses like North Spore.

"MaineCF's collaboration with Maine Venture Fund enables us to significantly expand our work with innovative small businesses across the state," said Joe Powers of Maine Venture Fund.

This partnership supports economic development across the state by investing in businesses with high potential for growth and impact.

"We've been incredibly grateful to have the support of organizations like the Maine Venture Fund as we seek to create a growing business that supports good jobs here in the state," said Chesler.



A business plan for a community platform that connects Maine families won first place at the 2026 Maine Startup Challenge. *Maine Venture Fund photo*

Beyond supporting scaling startups, Maine Venture Fund is also working to seed early-stage business ideas through the Maine Startup Challenge.

The Maine Startup Challenge is an annual, statewide business plan competition run by Maine Venture Fund and sponsored by MaineCF. Students and aspiring entrepreneurs from kindergarteners to adults have the opportunity to turn their best ideas into a business plan and compete for cash prizes.

"We love hosting the Maine Startup Challenge. You never know who might come up with Maine's next great business."

— Nina Scheepers, Maine Venture Fund

"Our goal with the challenge is not only to get to know the early stage businesses in the open tier that might be ready for investment in the coming years, but also to encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs with the student tiers," said Nina Scheepers of Maine Venture Fund.

Since its founding in 2022, it has awarded \$68,000 to entrepreneurs of all ages. This year, the Maine

Startup Challenge received 232 business plan applications from 80 towns and all 16 counties in Maine.

This year in the open tier category, Jordan Haddadi took home the first place prize for Portland PlayDates, a hyperlocal community platform connecting Maine families. Clearwater Cast Bait Co from Waynflete took home the first place prize in the K-8 tier for their business plan to create a water soluble soft fishing lure that reduces plastic in the environment.

Other inspiring ideas included a Washington County Community College's plan for NewStart, which would refurbish electronics to create affordable devices for formerly incarcerated individuals returning to their communities.

The Clementine Club of South Portland High School won the high school tier and audience choice awards for its plan for a subscription box designed for girls to learn about entrepreneurship.

"We love hosting the Maine Startup Challenge. You never know who might come up with Maine's next great business," Scheepers said.



Working Together

Financial advisor JB Sullivan reflects on MaineCF partnership

For JB Sullivan, it always comes back to the people and the place.

Those two things are at the center of all he does, whether it's working with clients at Portland Global Advisors (PGA) to realize their philanthropic goals or engaging with MaineCF to continue the work that inspires him for nearly half his life.

JB, a principal of PGA who recently completed his volunteer service on MaineCF's Investment Committee, grew up in Freeport, where he saw the tremendous transition the town underwent after its shoe factories closed. He moved away for a while, living in larger cities and traveling the world, but was always drawn to the coast of Maine.

"I just love this place," he says. "I've lived in other places and have been all over the world, but this is home."

Soon after he moved back in 1995 to start his company and raise his family in Yarmouth, he connected with MaineCF, kickstarting a

relationship that has endured and grown for more than three decades.

How did you first learn about MaineCF?

When I moved back to Maine to start Portland Global Advisors, Andy Nixon, who was CEO of Dead River at the time, became a great mentor of mine. We became fast friends, and one day he called me and said, "Sully, I've got somebody you got to meet." That somebody was Marion Kane, who was the president of MaineCF at the time. A couple of weeks later, Marion asked me if I would join the board and Investment Committee. That was the start of it.

What about being involved with MaineCF appealed to you?

I saw this as an opportunity to give back. I felt really strongly about that. I grew up here and I love this place. I am very grateful to this place for all that it did for me as a kid.

What has kept you engaged in doing this work With Maine CF for nearly half of your life?

I think MaineCF is a really critical organization to help make change and help make a difference in Maine. That's the big picture.

The smaller picture is people: all the great board members who I worked with, and the great staff that I worked with, and the committee members. I was on practically every committee in the organization at one point or another. They keep you engaged and committed to the community and giving back. I'm very grateful for that.

What kind of impact have you seen MaineCF have in the state over the years?

Community foundations in general are unique organizations in the nonprofit space. On the one hand, they're charitable banks. They're a collection of funds, and some of those funds are quite large and some of them are quite small. But collectively, you have the opportunity for outsized impact.

MaineCF is unique in that it's one of the only statewide community foundations in the country. That gives the foundation a unique opportunity to face statewide issues, so problems that people might face in Bangor, or Portland, or Millinocket, or Eastport, they're not necessarily strictly confined to those areas. Knowing the communities that you're serving is special.

Tell us more about your involvement with the Investment Committee over the past 30 years.

The committee comprises financial experts from different areas and backgrounds who steward the invested assets of the foundation.

I was on the committee from 1995-2025 and I chaired the committee for two of those years. When I started, the community foundation had about \$30 million in assets and now it's up to more than \$800 million. With that growth has come a lot more complexity. One of the more recent iterations of this committee has been its oversight of the foundation's 2% in Maine effort, where we choose to invest a portion of our assets in Maine-based businesses. Over the years they've had some really gifted, talented people on that committee and the staff has been terrific over time.

Portland Global Advisors and MaineCF have developed a strong relationship over the years. Why does PGA recommend MaineCF as a philanthropic partner to its clients?

First of all, philanthropy is integral to our business. We work exclusively for high-net-worth families and individuals. Philanthropy, mission, and impact are a big part of what many of those families care about.

We present options to our families, but with MaineCF, the key differences are the "buy local" element and the knowledge of the community. Those are the two things that keep us engaged and our families engaged with the community foundation. It's the knowledge of that local communities and the opportunities to make a difference in those communities that make the MaineCF unique.

What are the philanthropic trends you're seeing among your clients and broadly in the industry?

Clients are more creative and are thinking about impact more broadly. Some of that is through philanthropic money, but some of it is actually other forms of capital, like taking stakes in private companies or making loans.

That shift has been pretty profound in the last 10 years. Fast-forward to the last year and a half, where federal funding cuts and challenges have really become an existential threat to a lot of nonprofit organizations. Our clients now look for organizations that are creative, that are flexible, that are nimble, that are incredibly well run. That focus is really important because of the upheaval in the nonprofit world right now.

What advice do you have for your clients and advisors on incorporating philanthropy into their conversations?

Think holistically about the issues. Be creative. Be flexible. But first of all, put it on your agenda and talk about the possibilities.

JB Sullivan, principal at Portland Global Advisors and former MaineCF Investment Committee chair, reflects on his long history with MaineCF. *Brianna Soukup photo*

Together in Community

MaineCF's 14 competitive grant programs support organizations that meet the unique needs of their communities from youth literacy programs, food pantries, animal welfare, access to the arts and more. Learn more at mainecf.org/grants.

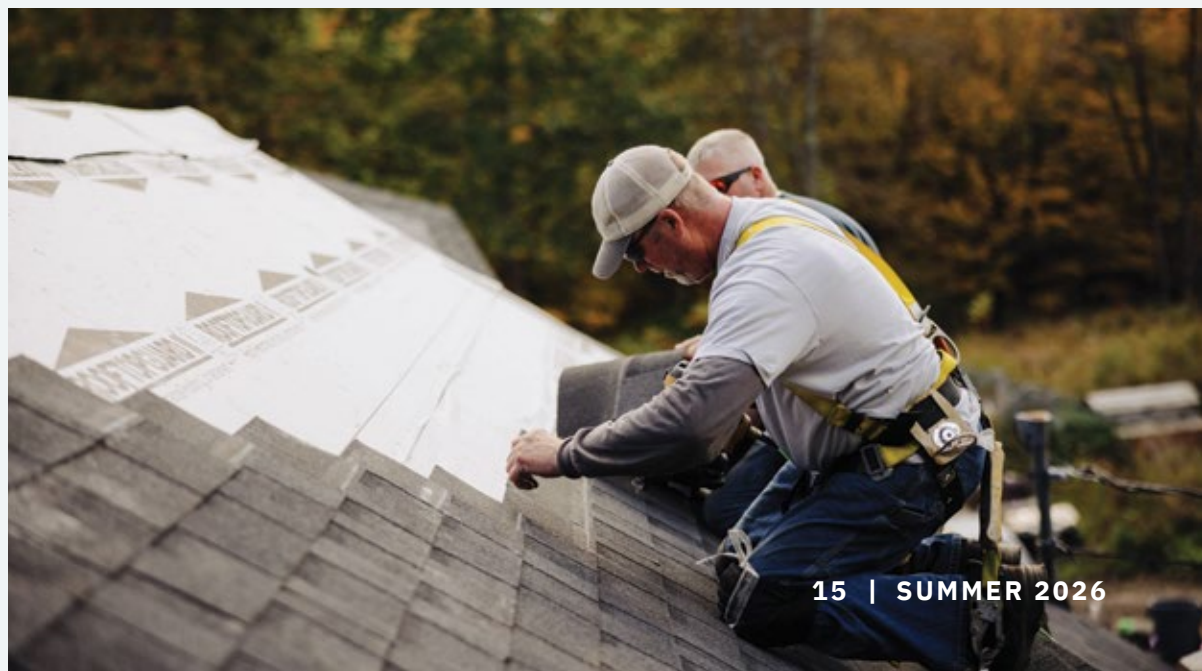
Clockwise from top left:
Island Readers & Writers, a 2026 Community Building grantee, connects children in Washington County and outer island schools with literary and art experiences that spark creativity, build confidence and connect students with the joy of reading and storytelling. *Island Readers & Writers photo*

Neighbor's Cupboard, a 2026 Community Building grantee, is a volunteer-run emergency food resource for low-income families in Winterport and Frankfort. Last year, it served 160 families with 3,500 bags of food. *Katherine Emery photo*

Maine Animal Health Alliance in Augusta, an Animal Welfare grant program grantee, provides affordable spay, neuter, vaccine and wellness services to animals regardless of their owners' financial situations. It also partners with other animal welfare organizations throughout the state to provide spay/neuter clinics. *Maine Animal Health Alliance photo*

Community Housing Improvement Project provides weatherproofing, replacement of windows and doors, handicap access ramps, and electrical and plumbing repairs for homeowners in central and eastern Lincoln County unable to do so because of illness, disability or financial need. *Tailwind Media photo*

Presente! Maine was awarded a 2026 grant from the donor-directed River Rock Shared Future Fund to support its work in Latine immigrant communities. Its programs include growing and harvesting culturally relevant foods from its two-acre Outdoor Learning and Food Hub as well as health resource navigation and support. *Presente! Maine photo*

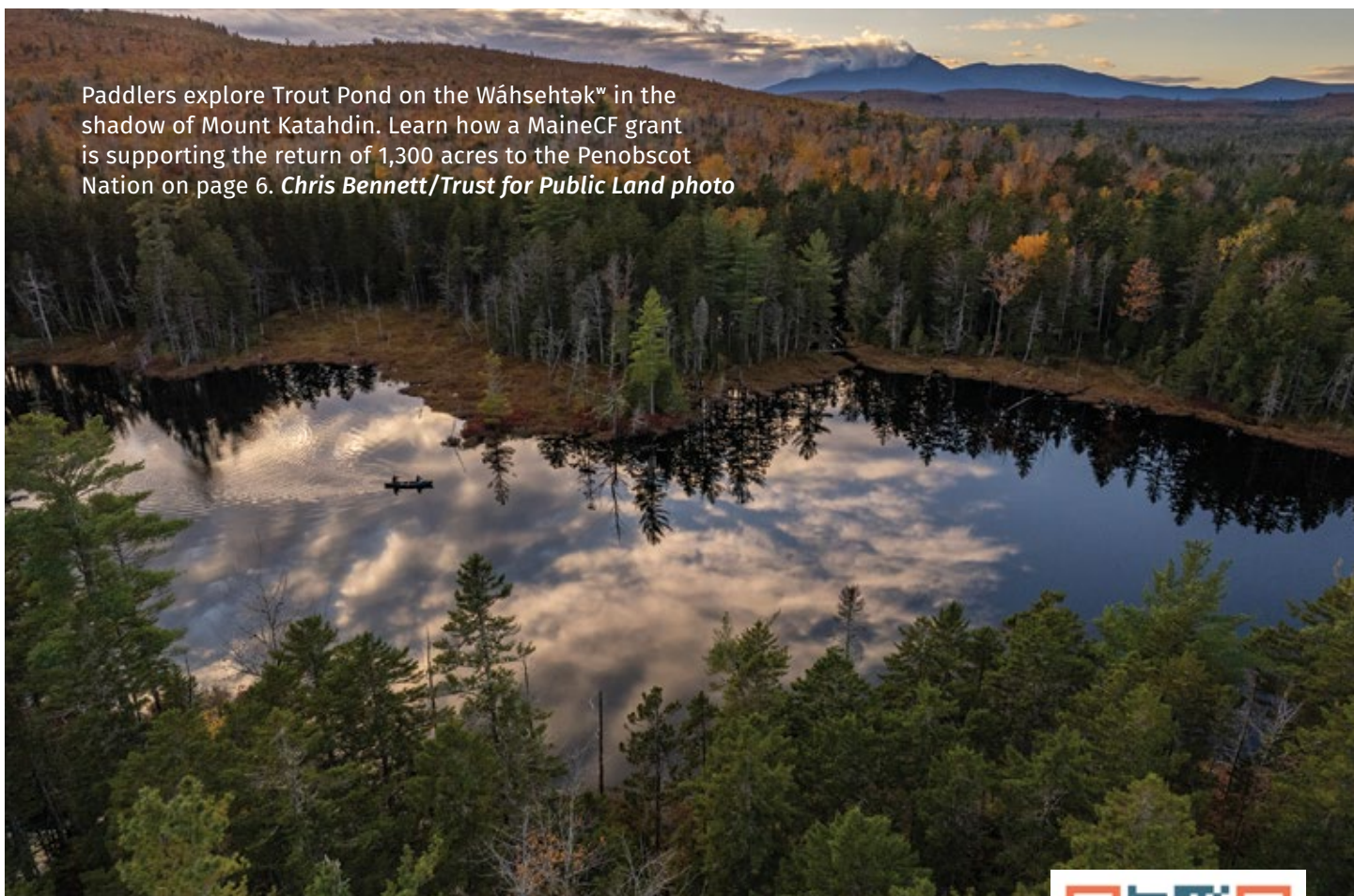




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Paddlers explore Trout Pond on the Wāhsehtək™ in the shadow of Mount Katahdin. Learn how a MaineCF grant is supporting the return of 1,300 acres to the Penobscot Nation on page 6. *Chris Bennett/Trust for Public Land photo*



The Maine Community Foundation is here when we're needed – today and for all of Maine's tomorrows. Join us to build a better Maine. www.mainecef.org

