



December 5, 2024

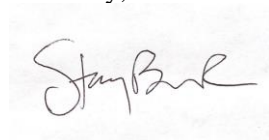
Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) is eager to continue our commitment to engaging with the First Light community through participating in the upcoming First Light Learning Journey Confluence cohort. MFT has supported then-board member Stacy Brenner and staff member Sarah Simon in a previous First Light year-long cohort, and board member Margot Kelley and staff member Sean Hagan in shorter First Light sessions. We are excited to support board member Alix Hopkins and staff member Abby Farnham in participating in this third cohort. MFT values our participation in the First Light community as an opportunity to continue to learn and reflect alongside peer organizations and support each other in our collective goal of working towards Wabanaki land access and stewardship. MFT is committed to organizational change and continued learning through the First Light collaboration and through building relationships with the Wabanaki community.

The Wabanaki peoples were the first stewards of the land that is now Maine and continue to steward land here today. MFT recognizes that Wabanaki land-based knowledge and practices and ancestral relationship with land are critical to our mission to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming. Since our participation in First Light began, MFT has worked to create training and learning opportunities for staff about the ways in which land conservation is linked to the history of colonization and the harmful impacts of colonialism on Wabanaki people. As an organization, we have supported staff-led changes to the ways in which we do our work, many of which have been carried out in collaboration with other organizations that participate in First Light. Some examples of these staff-led efforts include initiating a cross-departmental review of MFT's agricultural conservation easement template and making changes to ensure the easement language did not unintentionally prevent cultural use and access; making intentional space for important and difficult conversations, both internally and externally, about the role of land protection in perpetuating the impacts of colonization and the need for MFT to pursue strategies that create equitable access to land; and contributing money, fundraising capacity, and land search technical assistance to a Wabanaki land access and return project.

MFT has also contributed to the Wolankeiyuntomone kisi apaciyewik Fund. We are also committed to supporting Wabanaki food sovereignty through participating in the First Light Learning Journey Food Sovereignty working group and working with Brett Ciccotelli to support First Light land return projects that include agricultural resources. We support Wabanaki tribal sovereignty through our policy advocacy work and participation in the Wabanaki Alliance. We recognize that although these actions and changes represent progress for our organization, they are first steps.

As we embark on this next Learning Journey, MFT is grateful for the opportunity to strengthen relationships and connections that will support us and help us support others in organizational learning and change. We commit to approaching how we think about conservation and our land protection work with curiosity and humility. We commit to continuing to grow and learn in the community with other non-native-led organizations. We commit to trust and relationship building and sharing our resources and capacity with Wabanaki partners.

Sincerely,



Stacy Brenner, President & CEO