Kennebunk Land Trust

May 30, 2024

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TO: Town of Kennebunk Select Board
RE: Support of Application for Drala Drive to be placed on Town Warrant

Dear Town of Kennebunk Select Board,

On behalf of Kennebunk Land Trust (KLT), I am writing in support of the Drala Drive road application, to be being forwarded to the Kennebunk Town Warrant for a public vote. Drala Drive is currently the only access road to our newest nature preserve, named Tributary Preserve. This preserve is over 50 acres, and was donated to KLT in 2022 by Chrisopher Bartsow, the builder of the Highland Rose Subdivision and Drala Drive. When the land was donated to KLT, a small parking area was also built to welcome trail users. Since this land donation, KLT has begun building nature trails and paths so a new nature preserve can be enjoyed by the public. We have had local students and residents volunteer with us to build these trails, and have put our time and resources into materials and signage. We have also held a public fundraising campaign for over $5,000 involving our members who contributed to in order to make these improvements.

In the fall of 2023, the application for acceptance of Drala Drive as a public road was not forwarded to the town warrant for a vote. As such, the road remained private and the Highland Rose Homeowners Association closed public access to the road, thus closing public access to Tributary Preserve.

Under the new town ordinance language, public road acceptance is allowable if it is deemed there is a public benefit. Tributary Preserve not only protects headwaters in the Kennebunk River Watershed from further development and potential pollution, it also provides another unique opportunity for the people of Kennebunk and surrounding communities to enjoy nature. The addition of over 2 miles of trails and the potential to link them with other KLT properties in the future would create one of the longest contiguous trail systems in Kennebunk providing for extensive hikes, nature walks, wildlife habitat and observation, bird watching and so much more. We urge the Select Board to see Tributary Preserve and its nature trails as a public benefit and forward the road application to the Town Warrant. This will be the first step in an effort to open the preserve for residents and visitors to enjoy nature and outdoor recreation in all seasons. We are hopeful that Tributary Preserve will become open and accessible to the public, which would be made possible through public road acceptance.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for all the work you do in our town.

Sincerely,

Sandy Gilbreath, Executive Director

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A non-profit organization conserving and stewarding land since 1972