



**Stantec**

May 29, 2013

Cathance River Education Alliance  
PO Box 187  
Topsham, Maine 04086

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my distinct pleasure to write to you in full support of the programs and opportunities offered to our community and schools by Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA) in Topsham, Maine. CREA makes a significant impact on local stewardship, providing truly unique experiential education opportunities and programs that educate the public about the natural world around us as well as specifically those associated with the Cathance River Preserve and Merrymeeting Bay watershed.

As a principal scientist and certified wildlife biologist/forester at Stantec Environmental Consulting, I've had the distinct pleasure to become involved with CREA on a multitude of professional and technical levels. As community partners, Stantec has worked directly with CREA for the past thirteen years contributing our individual scientists' research skills as volunteer mentors for school programs, as well as offering CREA access to cutting edge scientific equipment for the study of the preserve's health and diverse wildlife populations. These types of efforts are strongly supported by Stantec as they help introduce and ground future scientists to the diverse professional and technical career roles offered in the field of natural resources science and management.

As one of the participating Stantec scientists, I've personally enjoyed directly interacting with local students over time as a volunteer field instructor/mentor, providing technical guidance as high school classes conduct research in the field. This year five Stantec scientists took part in this program, assisting with a variety of bat, fish, and wildlife habitat related projects. I had the distinct pleasure of assisting two students in an Honors Biology class conducting a remote camera wildlife study that successfully captured quality videos of a variety of local wildlife. As a culminating experience, students proudly presented their findings to the public at the Topsham Public Library. I can personally attest to the impact these programs have with regard to learning through hands-on experience. In fact, these kinds of authentic opportunities can be pivotal for our youth, sparking passion for the environment and science-related careers.

On a more personal note I've had the pleasure of listening to the supertime stories of three of my own children who have, over time, have had opportunities to participate in ongoing CREA program activities. I was on-site at the ecology center while two of my sons' classes visited CREA this past year to conduct aquatic and terrestrial wildlife research. Experiences like these enable students to take responsibility for their learning. As my son said, *"When you learn off-site at a place like the Cathance River Preserve, it gives you a better handle on what you are actually learning about, and how what you're learning can be used in the real world. When you take your learning into your own hands and use it, it becomes fun."*

Similarly, I also serve on the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) Advisory Council, a local organization of note that monitors the Cathance Preserve and holds the property easement. Together, our organizations, Stantec, BTLT, and CREA have worked in partnership to educate and connect the

community to nature since CREA's inception in 2000. We strongly support CREA's efforts wholeheartedly, and have personally seen the dynamic impact this protected 235-acre parcel and CREA's programs have made on our community. I will note that other evolving natural resource focused organizations currently within the local community recognize the diverse opportunities provided by CREA and hope to forge and grow enhanced symbiotic relationships over time that promote the interests of the individual organizations.

Lastly – and most importantly, CREA's ability to provide focused, high quality, localized outdoor educational experiences for students with terrestrial and aquatic studies is critical to opening the doors towards a better understanding of the natural world around us, and quite easily play a direct and key foundational role in the development of individual careers in the field of natural resources and science. These types of activities are unfortunately otherwise far too limited to today's typical student; *any* opportunity that provides even irregular access to the outside environment around us deserves the full support and attention of not only participating teachers and students but also the surrounding community. CREA provides a truly unique opportunity to jumpstart that process and to directly influence many young lives in a fundamental manner – and helps direct paths toward careers that are becoming more important as the influences of climate change and global development become more apparent.

I'm happy to provide additional information and support if I can be of further assistance. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Pelletier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Pelletier, CWB, PWS, C/LMF  
Principal Scientist, Stantec Consulting