



1/31/2024

Dear Chair LaFountain, Chair Landry, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

On behalf of Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM), we are writing in support of LD 2141, An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations, recognizing its role in strengthening protections against invasive aquatic plant infestations.

Lake Stewards of Maine is a longstanding, statewide 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that since 1971 has trained volunteer community scientists to collect credible data on metrics of lake health. Since the turn of the 21st century, LSM's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program has trained over 4,000 volunteers to survey lakes for aquatic invasive plants and other aquatic invaders. Our primary statewide role has been prevention and early detection of AIS, however, as part of the state's AIS Rapid Response team, we are increasingly assisting lakes with new invasive plant infestations. Our staff mobilizes volunteers to help conduct comprehensive surveys to identify the extent of an infestation. In recent years, LSM has revisited communities grappling with infestations, particularly in regions of the state with limited local resources. Our focus has been re-surveying areas that have implemented removal protocols and identifying any new instances of invasive growth.

As Maine's climate changes and use of Maine's water resources increases, Maine's lakes are now at a higher risk of infestation from aquatic invasive species than ever before. Maine is now battling nearly 40 aquatic invasive plant (AIP) infestations, with three new confirmed infestations detected in 2023 alone. We expect this number to increase in the future, straining AIS funding and statewide efforts.

The proposals presented in LD 2141 would significantly boost Maine's capability to manage and monitor existing AIP infestations. The proposed \$2M appropriation provides valuable resources for combatting AIP and preventing their further spread. However, while this one-time infusion of resources will be beneficial, AIP infestations are increasing in Maine, and will require more dedicated resources in the future. Each year, more infestations are discovered, and new potentially invasive aquatic plants are identified.

LSM endorses the bill's requirement for DEP and IFW to review policies and procedures for surface use restrictions. Many aquatic invasive plants spread through fragmentation. Motorized boat traffic can contribute to further spread within and between waterbodies by creating fragments which can be carried on currents, boats, trailers, and other equipment.

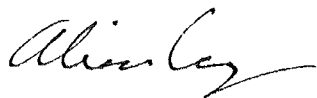
It is the hope of LSM that the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee supports Bill LD 2141. The bill will

be a positive step towards protecting Maine's lakes and waterbodies from the ecological, economic, and public health impacts of aquatic invasive plants. LD 2141 will enhance the public's awareness of aquatic invasive species, and serve as a potential catalyst for further long-term, sustained solutions to combating the advancing threat of aquatic invasive species.


Prevention and early detection of AIP are the surest way to eradicate an infestation. LSM volunteers and staff will continue to survey lakes and educate lake communities about aquatic invasive plants, however, broader support from the state will be necessary to meet the current and future challenges.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alison Cooney".

Alison Cooney, LSM Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brett Willard".

Brett Willard, LSM Aquatic Invasive Species Program Director