

In support of LD 164 An act to fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund

Dear Senator Brenner and Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

We are concerned for the quality of water which is threatened in many places globally. It is Maine's top natural resource, both marine and fresh waters. We can only do a little bit, so are focused on trying to keep Maine's fresh waters clear of non-native species that can outcompete and degrade our freshwater quality.

We have spent 20 seasons focused on primarily aquatic plants; in that regard, we have gone well beyond Panther Pond in Raymond, the lake we live beside and monitor annually, to volunteer in assisting with monitoring on over 26 lakes across Maine for the 11 illegal invasive aquatic plants.

Last week we attended a webinar of the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds (FOVLAP) and got totally discouraged by what its 800 lakes are enduring, as over 100 waterbodies are infested with one or more invasive species. As well, 80 of New Hampshire's lakes are infested, some with as many as 6 different species.

Unlike Vermont, Maine is in a relatively more enviable position with 33 known infestations, albeit, DEP is currently working on several highly difficult ones. Success happens: to date, 7 previously infested lakes have had their plant infestations eradicated; however, it has taken years of hard labor and expense.

From our experience we have learned that protecting lakes has to be multipronged and comprehensive, with early detection being key through 1. the Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) program and 2. the assiduous, repeated patrolling of our waters to identify "pioneer" colonies.

There are so many areas needing to be addressed, such as mitigation and restoration, education, enforcement, septic system and non-point source drainage of nutrients into our water systems. We personally have seen algal blooms, and the rise in periphyton growth from development and runoff and malfunctioning septic systems, and the outburst of blue-green algae (gloeotrichia) right in our own lake over the past 58 yrs.

We need more personnel to carry out all that needs covering: education and training is a key component along with CBI hirings. We need more funds to pay for these, as well as for supplies and equipment or for subcontracting remediation. Divers and chemicals and DNA testing are costly and beyond the scope of even our robust cadre of volunteers. A case in point: Big Lake in Washington County: although we volunteers made visual inspections from the surface by snorkeling and using a variety of watercraft, we had a limited view down to 5 or 6 feet, BUT, divers discovered many patches of variable milfoil in 8 to 11 foot depths in the same area.

There are many needs in all directions that our taxes should go toward, but this is an area that has a chance for success if we act in time.

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