



Testimony in Support of LD 164, An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund

By Nick Bennett, Staff Scientist

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Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Nick Bennett, and I am the Staff Scientist for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). NRCM is Maine's leading environmental advocacy group with more than 25,000 members and supporters. I am testifying in support of LD 164.

Maine is known for its clean water. Mainers and visitors alike flock to our lakes, rivers, and coast to swim, boat, hunt, fish, and otherwise enjoy these incredible resources. They are our crown jewels, both supporting our senses of place and well-being and providing a huge economic engine for the state. The organization Maine Lakes estimates that the net economic value of our lakes (the sum of lake-related expenditures on things like recreation, property purchases, water consumption, boats, etc.) is about \$12 billion. That is a big part of Maine's economy.

However, there are many threats to our lakes. Invasive plants and algae blooms can make lakes unusable. Failing septic systems and camp road erosion are leading sources of nutrient pollution that feed algae blooms and invasive plant infestations. Remediating these threats can easily cost millions of dollars for a single pond. Municipal code enforcement officers, whose job it is to ensure that shoreland zoning ordinances are enforced to help keep lakes clean, often lack the training and resources to do so properly. Climate change is another serious threat to our lakes. Warmer waters make algae blooms more severe and increase the likelihood that such blooms will result in catastrophic losses of dissolved oxygen and fish kills.

There is no one silver bullet to protect Maine's lakes, but as the threats to them have grown, lake funding has not kept up. LD 164 would help to remedy that. The money could be used for projects that reduce lake pollution, training of personnel to protect lakes, and as a source of matching funds for such purposes, helping to generate more money for lake protection.

For these reasons, and for the sake of our beautiful lakes, I urge you to vote ought-to pass on LD 164.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.