

January 29, 2023

Dear Members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee:

As a lifelong summer resident of Lake Wesserunsett in Madison and long-time member of the Lake Wesserunsett Association, I write in support of **LD 164: *An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund***. Because Maine lakes are suffering from the effects of climate change, from development pressures, from overuse, from invasive species, and from habitat and biodiversity loss, we urgently need statewide coordination, support, and funding for the protection, conservation, preservation, and remediation of our 6,000 beautiful lakes and ponds. Local volunteers and local funds cannot manage this statewide problem.

Take just one threat: Invasive aquatic species. The major cause of infestations is not a mystery. Recreational boaters spread these plants and animals as they trailer their boats from waterbody to waterbody. Lakes, rivers, and streams along the I 95 corridor and nearby population centers are more likely to be infested, but all Maine waterbodies are vulnerable. The more waterbodies that become infested in the State, the greater the risk for the un-infested waterbodies.

Keeping lakes free of invasives has long been treated as a local problem. It's appropriate that people on and around the lake fund the effort. But lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds are statewide resources; this statewide problem will not be solved piecemeal.

The Courtesy Boat Inspection Program (CBI) has been successful in keeping much of the boating public aware of the problem of invasive species, but it relies too heavily on volunteerism. A lake association or other entity must initiate the program and then figure out how to fund it. If there is no association on a waterbody, then there is no CBI program. The annual \$2,000 cost share grant provided by DEP helps, but it covers only a fraction the cost. In 2022, our part-time program cost \$14,000. To cover the gap in funding, individual lake associations (volunteers) must beg their towns for funding, apply for additional grants, and engage in other kinds of fundraising.

We are proud of our 20-year-old CBI program, but we cannot afford to staff our public landing full-time. We have little control over what happens at other boat launches on our lake, including at private campgrounds, where boaters (and whole bass tournaments) can get around inspections by paying a small fee to launch.

In the 20 years since we began our CBI program, many more of the State's waterbodies have become infested. One thing that worries us on Lake Wesserunsett is the infestations of variable leaf milfoil and curly leaf pond weed in the Kennebec River in Fairfield, Skowhegan, and Norridgewock. Boat launches adjacent to those infestations have no inspection programs. They don't even have signs warning boaters of the threat. Those infestations are simply being left to spread and potentially infest nearby ponds, lakes, and streams.

Because Lake Wesserunsett is within five miles of a several of those river infestations and within an easy drive from the many infestations in the Belgrades, the State has rated Lake Wesserunsett as highly vulnerable to infestations. We need more help from the State. Please fund LD 164.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Payne
69 Forest Avenue
Orono, ME 04473
207-951-3265

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Orono
LD 164

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