

January 29, 2023

Dear members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is William Helprin and I live in the Town of Mt. Desert and I am asking for your support today for LD 164: An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund. I am the Director of the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary on Mt. Desert Island and we are involved in multiple projects focused on protecting water quality including Courtesy Boat Inspections, aquatic invasive plant patrols and volunteer trainings, runoff/erosion control, and stream passage maintenance for fish migration.

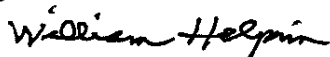
The State of Maine benefits significantly from thousands of trained volunteers who help safeguard lake and stream conditions every year with their donated work that greatly supplements the efforts of the small but dedicated Staff at DEP. Maine lakes, streams, and rivers are some of the greatest assets that we have, and their protection deserves to be well funded. I can't think of many better return on investment opportunities for Maine than the one proposed in LD 164.

There are many factors that threaten lake and stream water quality: increased likelihood of aquatic invasive introductions with more boats moving from lake to lake; greater risk of soil washing into lakes from major rain events that have become the norm, lake water temperatures that can be over 80 degrees even on large lakes in the summer, shorefront development pressure as more people build new houses or renovate old camps into bigger structures. These activities and the effects of more extreme weather move us closer to more lakes experiencing harmful algal blooms, decreased oxygen levels for fish and other aquatic organisms, reduced water clarity, and the potential to reduce property values and municipal taxes if our lakes become less desirable places to live near, fish in, or recreate on.

There will be more work for DEP and other agencies to do in future years to help protect our valuable water bodies – more invasive species introduction prevention, more surveys, more treatment and control operations for infested lakes, more efforts to deal with failing septic systems and poor drainage from paved and unpaved roads near lakes, more wildlife habitat protection, more grant funding for worthy projects. The list goes on, and we are fortunate to have so many citizens and non-profit organizations who are dedicated to the best possible future for our watersheds and waterbodies, but it is important for state government to do all that it can to meet our challenges.

We are fortunate with how good our overall water quality is, the recreational opportunities we have, and the wildlife that resides in this state. I hope that you will recommend passage of this bill and help keep it that way.

Signed,



William Helprin, Executive Director
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