



30 Mile River Watershed Association
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RE: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **LD 164**:
An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund

January 30, 2023

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of LD 164.

My name is Lidie Robbins and I am the Executive Director of the 30 Mile River Watershed Association. This watershed encompasses over 20 waterbodies in Central Maine. We are a coalition of seven towns, nine lake associations and two conservation organizations. Our mission is to work as a community for clean and healthy lakes, ponds and streams in our watershed.

I am testifying today to strongly support the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund that would provide much-needed funding to protect one of Maine's most precious resources.

In the summer of 2020, an invasive aquatic plant was found for the first time in our watershed, in Androscoggin Lake. The following summer, Androscoggin Lake turned pea-soup green with a lakewide algal bloom, the first there in 20 years. The lake was in crisis, and those who love this lake were heartbroken and fearful about the lake's future.

Since 2020, our organization has devoted as many resources as we able to our work on Androscoggin Lake in an effort to save it, before it's too late. For two seasons we have been fighting the invasive milfoil with intensive surveying and removal. Last season we conducted an in-depth watershed survey to identify threats to water quality and collected extensive water quality data to better understand what led to the algal bloom.

Like many lakes in Maine, Androscoggin Lake's water quality is threatened by phosphorus – a nutrient found in soil, septic waste, animal waste, and fertilizers. Phosphorus is food for algae and other plants. Very small increases in phosphorus can cause lake algae populations to increase and water clarity to decline; higher levels can cause algal blooms.

Increased pressure from development, along with climate change leading to warming lake temperatures and intense storms washing higher levels of polluted runoff into our lakes, are putting our lakes at greater risk. Invasive aquatic species are spreading throughout the state. **Now is the time to commit more resources to doing the work that is needed to keep our lakes clean and healthy.**

There is no quick fix to improving water quality in Androscoggin Lake and preventing the lake from turning green again. It will take years of addressing problems on roads, working with landowners to correct runoff issues on their properties, improving septic systems, and much more. As for the milfoil, our best hope of eradicating it is to fight it as hard as possible now, before it spreads throughout the lake and it's too late.

All of this work will take more capacity than our organization has currently, the costs are growing every year and Androscoggin Lake is just one of the lakes our organization works to protect.

This fund will provide resources for organizations like ours to do this vital work.

The communities in our watershed, and throughout Maine, depend upon the health of these lakes for our local economy, our tax base and our quality of life. Our lakes are one of our most valuable natural resources. Losing them would truly be devastating to our state. This fund provides an opportunity to invest in a better future.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 164.

Thank you,

Lidie Robbins
Executive Director