



For a thriving New England

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Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 4333

**RE: Testimony of Sean Mahoney, Conservation Law Foundation, in Support of
LD 1473, An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1473, An Act
to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources. Conservation Law Foundation
("CLF") is a member-supported nonprofit advocacy organization working to conserve
natural resources, protect public health, and build healthy communities in Maine and
throughout New England. I have been CLF's Vice-President for Maine since 2007.

Maine is uniquely blessed with pristine and abundant drinking water. Under the
federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the US Environmental Protection Agency grants waivers
of filtration to bodies of water that are public drinking water sources and have exceptional
water quality. Of the less than 40 bodies of water in the country that have these waivers,
nine are in Maine. The filtration waiver held by each of these nine community water
systems is of considerable value, allowing local taxpayers to avoid the costs of the
expensive filtration plants that other communities not as blessed must shoulder, both in
terms of the initial capital costs and then ongoing operations and maintenance costs.
Municipalities receiving water from an unfiltered source include Lewiston, Auburn, Poland,
Portland, Raymond, Casco, Sebago, Frye Island, Bangor, Brewer, Damariscotta, Presque
Isle, Bar Harbor, and Mount Desert. Because of the filtration waivers, public drinking
water rates in these communities are less than half of what is charged in many places in
Maine.

LD 1473 will continue to provide these waterbodies with the protections they have
always had in Maine. Last year, Speaker Fecteau sponsored an excellent bill, LD 2003, to
address the housing crisis we face across the state, including a number of incentives to
overcome some of the "NIMBY" local ordinances that have proven a roadblock for the
efficient and economic development of affordable housing alternatives. However, one

unintended consequence of that bill was the potential to provide incentives that could lead to development that would threaten the water quality of the lakes receiving the filtration waiver from the US EPA. As proposed by Senator Rotundo, LD 1473 will address this by ensuring that those areas critical to the preservation of the filtration waiver for those nine water bodies - Lake Auburn, Sebago Lake, Sebago Lake-East, Eagle Lake, Floods Pond, Hatcase Pond, Little Pond, Lower Hadlock Pond, Jordan Pond, and Aroostook River/Arnold Lake Brook – maintain the same protections they have always had.

To be clear, LD 1473 is not a NIMBY bill. Development may still be permitted in the watersheds of those waterbodies, subject to both state law such as the Site Location of Development Act and its Shoreland Zoning provisions, as well as any applicable local ordinances. What this bill will accomplish is to provide the effected communities and water districts with the best protections to keep costs down for thousands of taxpayers across the state in municipalities receiving water from an unfiltered drinking water source. We urge this Committee to support this effort and to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1473.