

Robert S. Capers, Ph.D.  
296 Chesterville Ridge Road  
Fayette, Maine 04349  
(207) 897-2257  
[rscapers@mindspring.com](mailto:rscapers@mindspring.com)

**Testimony in favor of LD 2141, An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations**

I am writing to support LD 2141, which would provide funding for management of existing populations of invasive aquatic plants and would require study of new ways to limit the additional spread of these species.

I am a botanist and did my Ph.D. research on aquatic plants, including invasive species, in Connecticut. I spent an additional two years doing invasive plant surveys of Connecticut lakes, studying the conditions associated with the occurrence of invasive species. I retired from the University of Connecticut five years ago and moved to Maine, where I now am coordinating surveys for invasive species on Basin, David and Tilton ponds in Fayette.

While working on invasives in Connecticut, I became aware of the extraordinary foresight shown by Maine officials in establishing programs to prevent the introduction of non-native species into Maine lakes, using money from boat registration fees to educate boaters about the dangers of invasives and establishing one of the nation's earliest programs of courtesy boat inspections at boat ramps, among other programs. I long wished that Connecticut would demonstrate some of the same wisdom that Maine has shown.

One of the things we know about invasive aquatic plants is that they are very difficult or impossible to eradicate once they become established. Under most circumstances, the best we can do with invasive infestations is to manage them, reducing the abundance of the non-native plants. Management is always expensive, and it is a continuing expense, needed year after year to keep infestations under control, minimizing the degree to which the invader interferes with swimming, boating and other activities in a lake. Limiting the spread of an invasive species within a lake also may reduce the likelihood that it will spread to other lakes and ponds.

Last year, we found an invasive plant, inflated bladderwort, in Tilton Pond, one of the lakes where I now do surveys. This is a concern not only for Tilton Pond but all the lakes and ponds that occur downstream from Tilton in the Androscoggin River watershed, including David Pond, Parker Pond, Echo Lake, Lovejoy Pond, Pocasset Lake, and Androscoggin Lake. The presence of this invasive in Tilton Pond threatens all nearby ponds in lakes, even those that are not directly downstream.

LD 2141 would provide badly needed resources to help manage invasive aquatic plants in Maine. The need for this money increases every year as the number of infested ponds and lakes continues to increase. Allocating this money is an investment in keeping Maine waters free of non-native species that can reduce their beauty and enjoyment, threatening economic activity around them and reducing the value of homes on the affected lakes.

One of the other things we know about invasive aquatic plants is that they spread largely on motor boats and the trailers used to move from one lake to another. This is not the only way in which the plants reach new lakes, but it is probably the most important one. Study after study has shown that motor boats and their trailers are vectors for disseminating invasive plants. Lakes with boat ramps where trailered boats can be launched are more likely to have invasive plants than other lakes, and they have more invasive species. Among the Fayette ponds where I work, Tilton Pond is the only one that has a public boat ramp. It is no accident that it's the only one that has an invasive aquatic plant.

LD 2141 would require the DEP and IFW to evaluate existing programs to limit the spread of invasive aquatic plants, both within lakes and among lakes. As much as the state has done in regulating introductions and limiting the spread of invasives – Maine remains a model far ahead of many other states in this regard – there is more that can be done. This legislation calls on the two departments to consider additional measures that would better protect the approximately 6,000 uninfected lakes and ponds in the state. It may seem extreme, but it might be wise to close boat ramps on lakes with invasive species so those plants cannot infect nearby lakes, as we know they otherwise will. In a state with so many invasive-free lakes, this would be a minimal sacrifice for recreational boaters, and it seems a worthwhile step to provide maximum protection for invasives-free lakes. There may be no state that has as much to lose as Maine by the additional spread of invasives into our extraordinarily beautiful and economically important Maine lakes.