

Testimony in SUPPORT LD 296, An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund

**Submitted to Environment and Natural Resources Committee February 9, 2025**

Chair Tepler, Chair Doudera, and Distinguished Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Tom Renckens. I represent the Worumontogus Lake Association (AKA Togus Pond) here in Augusta. I have lived on Togus Pond since 2000 and ask you today to support LD 296. Maine waters are a precious natural resource that are literally irreplaceable. These lakes, rivers and streams help support the mental and physical well being of thousands of Mainers and visitors annually. It is our duty to preserve this vital gift that we have inherited for future generations.

Unfortunately, many of our ponds and lakes are threatened by changing climate, by invasive species, by harmful algae blooms and increasing storm water runoff that threaten the quality of those lakes. Maine lakes and waters need our help now. Togus Pond is on the Maine Impaired Lakes list put out by the Maine DEP. Togus Pond has had a long history of algae blooms that are being exacerbated by a warming climate and increasing lake front development.

Togus Pond is in the middle of a huge restoration project and working hard to change our story. In 2019 we embarked on a scientific lake survey in partnership with the Maine DEP, the City of Augusta, and Ecological Instincts. The result was a 10 year Watershed Management Plan. The study showed that our algae blooms would more than likely double in frequency, leaving it green and potentially toxic during the months of August, September and October. The study offered a long term solution with an Alum treatment that could mitigate those algae blooms for 10 to 20 years. The treatment would cost over \$800,000. The lake association took on the enormous task to raise the money for this restoration but it is challenging.

By April of 2024 we successfully raised half of the funds that mostly came from property owners on the pond. We hired SOLitude Lake Management to do the first of two Alum treatments. The results were immediate and we had clear water for the remainder of the year. But we still need to do a second treatment and raising an additional \$400,000 is extremely difficult. This is a big project run by a small team of volunteers so additional funding from grants and state funding would be crucial to our success and will help us reach our goal to help preserve the pristine quality of the pond for the next generation.

Clean wholesome lakes and waters free of invasive species, free of algae blooms, thriving with native plants, birds and mammals are essential to the lives of Mainers. I ask you to support LD 296 so that we can preserve this pond and others like it for generations to come. Maine's lakes belong to all of us. Caring for our Maine lakes shouldn't fall so heavily on the shoulders of the lake association members.

Thank you for your kind attention,

Tom Renckens  
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