



February 10, 2024

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of LD 296

Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Dear Members of the Committee,

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **LD 296 – An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection, Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund**. Midcoast Conservancy’s mission is to protect vital land and waters on a scale that matters, and our work includes being stewards to Damariscotta Lake.

Damariscotta Lake is home. Home to sparkling water dotted with small islands. Home to a soundtrack of trilling loons. Home to premier fishing and world class iceboating. Home to mission-based outdoor recreation and education camps that have taught thousands of kids and even hosted retreats for 9/11 first responders.

Damariscotta Lake is also a lake at risk. Climate change is impacting Maine’s precious natural resources at an alarming rate. Surface temperatures of Damariscotta Lake have risen 6°C in the last three and a half decades. This is leading to a concerning trend of cyanobacteria proliferation in the lake. A large bloom in 2020 jump-started a partnership between Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences and Midcoast Conservancy to identify and study the organisms responsible for decreased water quality. Our initial work demonstrates a clear increase in prevalence of cyanobacteria blooms and duration of bloom season. Damariscotta Lake is not alone, lakes in northern New England are experiencing surface temperature increases faster than the world average, and more intense rainfall events are leading to increased runoff and nutrient pollution in lakes. These new conditions in lakes, higher temperatures, and more nutrients, can lead to proliferations of cyanobacteria. Maine has been fortunate in that there have only been a handful of known major cyanobacteria outbreaks/blooms that have threatened public health, however, with climate change, it is expected that exposure to these conditions will be more likely to occur. Funds appropriated through LD 296 would help mitigate these changes in Maine lakes, especially as federal funding that supports nutrient pollution reduction is less certain.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the committee to vote **in favor** of LD 296 to protect Maine lakes.

Sincerely,

Patricia Nease

Damariscotta Lake Watershed Manager on behalf of:

Midcoast Conservancy