

Honorable Environmental and Natural Resources Committee members:

My name is Kathy Moore and I am the President of the Friends of Messalonskee Watershed, a non-profit, volunteer lake association. I am writing in support of LD296 and ask you to support this vital bill.

Messalonskee Lake is in central Maine, between Waterville and Augusta and the last lake in the Belgrade Lakes chain of seven lakes. As a centrally located lake that offers great swimming, boating, fishing, and even a well-known bird watching spot, Messalonskee draws hundreds of visitors to the region every year that have a positive economic impact. FOM deals with two main issues - Variable Leaf Milfoil (VLM) and Water Quality. Although we now have an active water quality program; we've always focused primarily on milfoil control and for a good reason. **Messalonskee Lake's milfoil infestation has the distinction of being one of the highest in the state.**

Our milfoil issue has been ongoing for over 20 years. The milfoil comes primarily from the Belgrade Stream, beginning at the Wings Mill Dam. The Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) has never had enough funds to deal with this particular issue. FOM has tried, but the problem is complex and far beyond FOM's resources. Belgrade Stream is 7 miles long and is clogged with milfoil in many areas. More than 60 people live on the stream and it's a popular fishing spot. These residents often ask FOM when this problem will be addressed.

FOM has always been vigilant in keeping VLM at bay so that the lake remains usable for all to enjoy. Every season, FOM has used a combination of employing crews to hand-pull and lay barriers in shallow water, and contracting with Diver-Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH) companies to remove it in deeper waters. We've used DEP funds; town allocations from Belgrade, Oakland and Sidney; and member donations to fund these efforts. **Over just the past four years, over 90 tons of VLM has been removed from the lake.** It should be noted that VLM has been found in the Messalonskee Stream outlet that flows into the Kennebec River.

It's a never-ending cycle. Every year, we remove tons of milfoil, and every year, we do it all over again. Without a proper, effective solution to eradicate VLM at the source, this cycle will continue. I don't know the best-fitting solution to this problem, but I do know it will require more money than is currently available to the DEP or FOM. Without access to a stable, major funding source, this problem will not be solved. FOM and our partners are willing to do our part, but can't do it alone. There will come a day when we lose the battle with VLM and a beautiful lake, enjoyed by a lot of people, will be choked with masses of it.

Thank you.

Kathleen Moore, President  
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