

February 11, 2025

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 171, An Act to Enhance Protections Regarding Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State Submitted to Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

To: Chair Baldacci, Chair Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

I serve as the president of Watershed Friends (“Friends”), a non-profit organization in East Winthrop that is committed to the protection of the Cobbossee Watershed, a 318 square mile area that includes 28 lakes and ponds in central Maine. Our organization has a long history of helping manage the invasive aquatic plant threat that jeopardizes the health of these waters, and we work closely with local lake associations and lake conservation groups to support their efforts.

Unfortunately, many of the lakes in our region are battling infestations of invasive aquatic plants, and the costs to mitigate these infestations are significant, often reaching tens of thousands of dollars, with much of this falling on Maine’s DEP and non-profits like ours. This strain is felt by lakeshore owners who also face the potential loss of property value and habitat destruction.

Each summer, Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBIs) work long hours to inspect boats at local launches to prevent the spread of invasives into clean lakes. Friends helps fund these efforts by paying for CBIs who inspect boats and trailers as they prepare to launch into the lakes and ponds of the Cobbossee Watershed. While the costs to our small organization are considerable, they pale in comparison to the cost of controlling a new invasive plant infestation in one of our lakes. The loss of habitat and the impact on property values from an infestation would be devastating to our community and environment. Prevention is far more effective—and less costly—than trying to eradicate an infestation after it takes hold.

LD 171 would help reduce the risk of aquatic invasive species spread by strengthening watercraft inspection protocols at lakes that are already infested with invasive aquatic plants. This is especially important for most of the lakes in the Cobbossee Watershed, which are not yet infested but are at constant risk due to the high likelihood of contamination from visiting boats.

LD 171 would also prioritize monitoring inland waters that are infested with invasive aquatic plants, helping to prevent the spread of these invasives from one waterbody to another.

Maine’s lakes are invaluable resources: they provide clean drinking water, critical wildlife habitat, and countless opportunities for recreation. It is vital that we do everything in our power to protect them. LD 171 represents an important step toward enhancing the protections needed to preserve Maine’s lakes for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Henry Whittemore, President
Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed

Henry Whittimore
Readfield
LD 171

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