

Robert Capers  
Fayette  
LD 296

Good morning. My name is Bob Capers, I am a resident of Fayette, where I help coordinate surveys for invasive aquatic plants in several ponds. By training, I am a plant biologist and have several years of experience doing research on invasive species, mostly in Connecticut. I have to tell you that, while working on invasive plants in Connecticut, my colleagues and I were envious of the situation in Maine, where the state has been aggressive in setting up a system to inspect boats going in and out of the state's many lakes. The level of protection provided in Maine was far higher than anything Connecticut was even willing to consider. I applaud you for that.

I also acknowledge that the demands on the state's budget are many and that spending to control invasive plants may seem less necessary than other needs. On the other hand, it is worth remembering that, once established, it is virtually impossible to get rid of invasive aquatic plants; all we can do at that point is manage them, year after year. The state of Florida spends \$45 million every year doing just that. We also know that the value of homes on lakes can decline precipitously when lakes become infested with invasive plants. And that hurts both the landowners and the towns that rely on their tax dollars. Clearly, there are no winners when invasive plants get established in our lakes. And we're not even thinking here of the lakes' aesthetic, spiritual and ecological importance.

The bill you are considering, LD 296, would provide money to help control invasive plants that are already here and also would improve water quality in ways that would limit growth of plants, native and invasive, by reducing nutrient runoff. Nutrients like phosphorus, which promotes growth of algae and vascular plants, enter our lakes through soil erosion, runoff from roads and leaching from failing septic systems. On one of the water bodies where I do surveys, David Pond, the sediment on the bottom has a high level of phosphorus already, and this nutrient can leach into the lake water when oxygen levels become low, promoting undesirable plant growth. Because of David Pond's unusual vulnerability, we are particularly concerned about making sure no additional nutrients enter the water there.

As part of our efforts on this front, the 30 Mile River Watershed Association did a watershed survey that included David Pond several years ago, and it identified where improvements could be made to fix erosion and prevent runoff. But some of this work, as important as it is, is too expensive for the landowners to consider, so some of the improvements have not yet been made. The legislation you are considering would provide money that could be used to help fix some of these issues on this one pond and on many others like it, where we know what needs to be done but can't afford to do it.

I urge this committee to support the legislation. And I thank you for considering these important issues.