



**Testimony of  
7 Lakes Alliance**

**IN SUPPORT OF**

**LD 296: An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and  
Protection Fund  
Submitted to Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

**February 12, 2025**

Good morning, Chair Tepler, Chair Doudera, and Distinguished Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to express **7 Lakes' support for LD 296: An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund**. I am Laura Rose Day, the Chief Conservation Officer of 7 Lakes Alliance, located in Belgrade Lakes, Maine. 7 Lakes is a non-profit science- and community-based watershed organization working to conserve the lands and lakes of the Belgrade Lakes for all. The Belgrade Lakes watershed includes Messalonskee Lake, Long Pond, Great Pond, North Pond, Salmon-McGrath, and East Pond. 7 Lakes Water Quality Science program extensively monitors, analyzes, and helps develop effective approaches to protecting and restoring water quality. We collaborate with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Colby College, lake associations, towns, citizens, businesses, and many others to conduct assessments, develop plans, raise funds, and implement solutions to ensure lake health. 7 Lakes' programs include a comprehensive water quality science program, erosion prevention and control, invasive plant prevention and remediation, land conservation, and watershed-based education.

Maine's investment of \$4 million in the Lake Quality Restoration and Protection Fund over the next two years will, especially when leveraged by grant recipients, have a meaningful and much-needed positive impact on Maine's lakes. It will help support DEP and the state in their duties to sustain the economy, recreation, wildlife and other natural resources, outdoor traditions, and health benefits that lakes provide for Maine citizens.

Maine's lakes face significant and accelerating threats to water quality from myriad sources. Run-off polluted with phosphorus fuels unsightly, putrid, and potentially toxic algal blooms. Unsustainable development along waterways threatens habitat and water quality. Warming trends, increasingly erratic and intense weather events, and delayed ice-in and earlier ice-out accelerate these threats. Science demonstrates these threats; increasingly we experience them ourselves.

And let us be clear about what this means. For instance, excessive algal blooms mean waters that cannot support iconic wildlife; lakes where children cannot swim; diminished home values and local tax base; families who can no longer hold traditional summer gatherings because of green and potentially toxic lakes; stress over whether family members or pets should be exposed to lake waters. This is not the way Maine's lakes should be.

Moreover, according to a recent University of Maine study (Daignault et al. 2022), Maine's lakes (based on lakes over ten acres) provide \$14.4 billion in annual value to our state economy. The hard work and cost of restoring and protecting Maine's valuable lakes is expensive, but it is not nearly as expensive as eroding this incredibly valuable and irreplaceable resource.

Maine's network of statewide, regional, and local lake and watershed-based organizations, along with thousands of citizen volunteers, are doing their part. For instance, 7 Lakes' Youth Conservation Corps helps landowners halt erosion and the algae-fueling phosphorus it carries into lakes to keep them from turning green. We earn significant federal erosion control grants to address larger projects such as erosion from roads, highly leveraged by willing landowners, including towns. We conduct innovative science in collaboration with our partner Colby College and others, to monitor and analyze lake water quality year-round. 7 Lakes has worked with local lake associations on alum treatments, costing millions of dollars, to address excessive algal blooms that interfere with recreation, property use, and threaten health. Together, Maine's watershed organizations and our partners collectively raise millions of dollars to protect and restore lakes, but it is not enough. Success of these collaborative public-private efforts requires additional state investment.

A \$4 million dollars into the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund over the next 2 years through LD 296 is not only reasonable but also an exceptionally wise and necessary investment in the future of lakes throughout Maine. Because preventing harm is the most cost-effective approach, the fund's criteria support prevention as well as remediation.

Thank you for your serious consideration and support for **LD 296: An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund**. I would be pleased to answer any questions or provide additional information. I can be reached at (207) 931-7710.

Sincerely,

Laura Rose Day  
Chief Conservation Officer, 7 Lakes Alliance