

TESTIMONY OF

DAVID J. BASLEY

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND
WILDLIFE**

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 77

**“An Act to Stabilize and Sustainably Fund the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,
Fisheries and Hatcheries Division by Increasing the Inland Fishing License Fees and
Establishing the Inland Fisheries Conservation and Enhancement Fund”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative Wood of Greene

DATE OF HEARING: February 24, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am David Basley a resident of Ashland and a retired Fisheries Biologist of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department. For 33 years, I managed the fisheries resources in northern Maine’s Fish River Lakes Region – Region G as identified in many IFW brochures. I am here today to speak in favor of L.D. 77.

During my tenure, I saw many advances in how the fisheries resource was monitored and sampled. One was being the use of digital fish finders, remote underwater cameras, and now underwater drones to locate and observe target species. Another was being the use of electronic tags that can be inserted in fish so that their movements can be followed with remote loggers or hand held antennas to identify spawning areas, post spawning refuge areas and use of other aquatic habitat. As future advances will be surely be made in mechanical, electronic, and digital devices to monitor and sample fish populations, it is important that Maine fisheries biologists have the funds to leverage the purchase of these devices so as to stay abreast of these advances. This conservation and enhancement fund will assist in that endeavor.

I experienced the introduction of invasive species in several regional waters. In some cases this resulted in a very speedy response of a few months to verify their presence, develop a plan with public approval to eradicate the threat and then obtain funds to carry out the plan before the invasive fish could become established. In other cases such as the muskellunge in the St. John River, they were too well established and only natural physical barriers restricted their movement within the drainage.

In another instance the invasive fish, a smelt, had become well established and threatened the native population of Arctic Charr in Big Reed Pond in Piscataquis County. Under the direction of Biologist Frank Frost, a multi-year plan was devised that entailed working with

various stakeholders and partners, including among others the Maine Army Aviation group in Bangor, Bradford Sporting Camps, and Mountain Springs Trout Farm, who received captured wild Arctic Charr and brook trout to held and used to restore the unique genetic population of charr and brook trout to Big Reed Pond. This long term project has proven to be successful when in 2017 three different year classes of Arctic charr were sampled confirming successful spawning seasons in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Having this Conservation and Enhancement Fund available would be a funding asset to address immediate threats of invasive species. It would also facilitate receiving appropriations, grants and gifts from any public or private source to address long term projects necessary to protect, save and restore wild native fisheries should they be brook trout, Arctic charr, or lake whitefish as examples.

Having the fund available to develop isolated space for wild fish in appropriate state hatcheries would address fish health threats to the hatchery production stock from wild fish being held for restoration purposes.

Having \$1 of the license increase go to the Boat Launch Facilities Fund would be an asset to purchase watercraft access sites that may unexpectedly come up for sale for which only a short time is available to make the purchase.

In closing, when I reviewed my old fishing licenses for this testimony, I noted that the last fishing license increase to \$25 appeared to be in 2010. In reviewing a copy of the registration form for the Long Lake Ice Fishing Derby, it listed a 1 day registration for 14 years and over at \$20 and a 2 day registration at \$30. The derby this year had 2, 184 registered participants, a record number, fishing for cash prizes totaling \$25,000. The derby is recognized as a great economic boom to the area for the weekend for lodging businesses, restaurants, and sales of gas, food and beverages at local convenience stores. I was pleased to read in the written testimony of Paul Bernier, Chairman of the Long Lake Ice Fishing Derby, that the Derby Executive Board supports the license increase. It would appear to me that the cost of a fishing license allowing an individual the privilege to fish all year for \$25 is a small expense for today's angler compared to other fishing trip costs. It is well worth the cost of a \$7 fee increase to establish this Fund for the conservation and enhancement of inland freshwater fisheries resources in the state of Maine.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I would entertain any questions from Committee members.