

### **Commentary on LD 430**

Provided here by Gregory D'Augustine MD  
39 Beau Drive, Greene, ME 04236  
207-650-7028

Greetings to our hard working members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

I am opposed to LD 450 for many reasons.

I am a medical doctor in Androscoggin County, as well as a member of the Maine Medical Association and its Public Health Committee. I also serve on the board of "Maine Rivers", a non-profit organization which works to maintain and improve the quality of our state's rivers. My comments do not represent official positions taken by these organizations, though I expect both groups would be in agreement with my comments. Finally, I should note that I own shoreline property on the Androscoggin River, which has been heavily dammed for many years, to the detriment of its water quality.

This complicated bill fosters the misguided and scientifically flawed notion that dams in general, and hydropower dams in particular, are inherently environmentally friendly or "green". The reality is far different. Dams have always had a net destructive impact on most river wildlife, and have thereby ruined many profitable businesses based on wildlife, especially those based on fishing. The inshore cod industry is a long standing example. Once Maine had a thriving cod fishery; a highly profitable fishing model. But the construction of dams on most of Maine's rivers prevented small fish species from getting upriver to spawn, causing their populations to plummet, with inshore cod populations soon following that downward spiral.

These same small fish species, often used as bait by the lobster industry, have successfully recovered in large numbers coincident with extensive dam removal. The Kennebec River alewife population recovery following removal of the Edwards Dam is a fine example of this process.

Placing a moratorium on dam removal would halt this beneficial trend that Maine has experienced over the past 50 years.

This bill comments that its rationale is based on 'hydropower generating significant quantities of renewable energy'. It's important to understand that many of our hydropower dams are small scale energy producers, hardly what would be accurately termed "significant". Their negative impact on our rivers and wildlife is what's "significant". Additionally, the existing rules process (usually through approximately 50 year licenses through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) is required to consider the energy production of any dam as an important benefit, to be balanced against its negative impact. There is no need to add additional laws to regulate a process which is already a complicated one requiring literally years to complete.

Please remember that our own Senator Ed Muskie was a particularly vocal supporter of cleaner waters in the nation, playing a crucial role in the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. Dams continue to retard steps toward improving our river water quality by creating impoundments of water which is prone to low or even 0 oxygen levels in summer. Dams also serve to impound "legacy waste" from outdated paper mill processes, insufficient sewage systems, etc.

It's my firm belief that LD 450 represents a seriously harmful step backward in our battle to improve the health of our freshwater and saltwater fisheries as well as that of our citizens. Please resist this misguided effort.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gregory D'Augustine MD