

Landis Hudson
Maine Rivers
LD 1848

Thank for your attention to this important bill to improve dam safety in Maine. We urge you to support LD 1848.

Maine's Dam Safety Program is underfunded and inadequately staffed.

The potential for dam collapse or dam breaches leaves many communities at risk. We take note of several conclusions from the Maine Dam Safety White Paper released in October 2021.

-The White Paper noted that 907 dams are the responsibility of the State of Maine, that is a remarkable number. However, the report points out that the total number of dams in Maine remains unknown. While Maine's hydropower dams are licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which commits resources to dam maintenance and safety. The State of Maine does not have a viable or reliable system for managing the safety of the large number of non-hydropower dams that remain in place but are not licensed or managed by FERC.

"We are still finding dams today and with over a thousand dams in the State it would be not be an accurate account of the number of dams in the State of Maine." P. 16

The 2021 White Paper refers to a report from the year 2000:

"It is clear that the Maine DSP is critically understaffed, short of resources and possesses both latent and patent defects which need immediate attention if public safety is not to be further compromised." P. 17

The presence of hundreds of aging and poorly maintained dams in our waterways, particularly as we see our storms increasing in severity, poses real risks to Maine people and our communities. Old dams that are poorly maintained will fail, and the likelihood that this will happen during a storm is real.

As the Executive Director of the nonprofit Maine Rivers, I have been working on river and stream restoration projects for over a decade. Maine Rivers has been involved in numerous projects to install technical fishways at dams, often collaborating with dam owners. We have also worked on several removals of old and failing dams. I have become aware of the large number of dams in the state, their overall poor condition and the risks that they pose to the public, as well as to our water quality and the vitality of our migratory fish populations. I urge you to support LD 1848 and take action. The conclusion of the recent White Paper is not complicated:

"The main solution on keeping this program effective and solvent is to secure funding so that it can be self - supporting and to create a stable platform that is a beneficial and worthy program."

LD1848 is an important step forward and offers to bring Maine's dam safety program closer to standard that are met on other states. Many other states have waited until a disaster occurs to upgrade their programs, we have an opportunity to make improvements now, without experiencing a dam breach or loss of life and property.

We encourage your consideration of LD 1848 and hope that you will commit to finding a sustained funding path to support the important work of the Maine Dam Safety Program.