

Robert Capers
30 Mile River Watershed Association
LD 2141

Greetings. My name is Bob Capers. I'm a resident of Fayette and I coordinate invasive plant surveys for the Basin, David and Tilton Pond Association. I'm also a member of the 30 Mile River Watershed Association's board of directors, and in that capacity I work to promote healthy lakes, ponds and streams in an area that extends from Androscoggin Lake north to the Sandy River watershed east of Farmington. By training I'm a botanist, and I have extensive experience working on issues affecting lake health.

I'm writing to ask the committee's support for LD 2141, which would provide money annually for work related to restoration and protection of water quality in Maine lakes.

Maine's thousands of lakes face a number of issues, but one of the most serious is the rising levels of nutrients that promote algal blooms and allow both native and non-native plants to become more abundant than is healthy. The sources of these nutrients include erosion from around homes, run-off from roads, and septic systems that are old or poorly maintained. The increasing number of high-rainfall events we've had the past couple of years exacerbates this problem because these events produce more runoff than our culverts and diversion devices were designed to handle, so nutrients run right into the lakes. As climate change continues, these extreme rainfall events are only going to get more frequent.

Fixing the issues we know about already will be expensive. Putting in new septic systems around old lake-shore cabins may require sophisticated, engineered waste-disposal systems. As important as this work is, it's too expensive for many landowners to consider, so an entire lake suffers, year after year, as nutrient levels rise. Unless the state steps in to help pay for these projects, we jeopardize the billions of dollars generated by lake-related economic activity every year, the investment Maine residents have in their lake front properties and the property tax dollars generated by those properties, which many towns rely on.

A dedicated source of revenue such as proposed in this legislation would be a terrific boon for non-profit associations that have identified many projects that would reduce run-off into our lakes but lack the resources to do the actual work. In addition to financing badly needed lake-protection work itself, this money would reduce pressure on other sources of revenue for lake preservation and restoration, potentially freeing up money to help with work designed to reduce invasive aquatic plant infestations.

This bill represents a win-win for our lakes and for everyone who lives on them or just enjoys an occasional paddle. Thank you for considering this important issue.