

Ted Tucci
Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation
LD 2141

Good afternoon, Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of LD 2141, “An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Bottle Deposits to Lake Water Quality Restoration Fund. . . .”

My name is Ted Tucci, and my testimony is submitted on behalf of Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation (ALIC). We are a non-profit lake association representing more than 170 members. Our mission is to preserve and protect Androscoggin Lake’s water quality, wildlife, and natural beauty.

Androscoggin Lake is a 4,000-acre great pond that touches the communities of Wayne, Leeds, and Monmouth. Maine’s Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry has recognized parts of Androscoggin Lake as “support[ing] a diverse assemblage of rare species and exemplary natural communities.”

Over the last five years, Androscoggin Lake has been under attack from invasive variable milfoil and late summer recurrent algal blooms that have restricted recreational access to the lake and endanger the health of people and wildlife. It is not an exaggeration to say that these conditions threaten Androscoggin Lake’s existence as a natural and recreational resource for all to enjoy. Consistent with our mission established more than 50 years ago, ALIC has taken aggressive action to protect the future of Androscoggin Lake. We have rallied private sector support to raise more than \$150,000 to prevent milfoil from overtaking the lake and to fund some of the scientific work needed to evaluate the factors causing recurrent algal blooms. In addition, dozens of citizen scientists and other volunteers have stepped forward to contribute their time and talent to saving Androscoggin Lake. That work is continuing. For example, this year we will be raising the funds needed to prepare a watershed management plan that proposes solutions to prevent the algal blooms that pollute Androscoggin Lake. In sum, ALIC (a non-profit) and the people who support us through donations are doing our part to meet the challenges confronting our lakes and ponds, but we cannot do it alone. Now is the time for the State of Maine to do its part by enacting LD 2141 into law.

It is not hard to make the case for investing \$2 million annually to support water quality protection and restoration for lakes. The Maine DEP has noted that “[a]s many as 66% of all Maine adults. . .use lakes during the course of each year.” The University of Maine’s recent study concludes that the “total net economic value of Maine’s lakes is over \$14 billion, with the largest contribution coming from lakefront properties.” <https://www.lakes.me/valuing-lakes>. Maine DEP also confirms a direct link between poor water quality and declining property values. “There is no single feature of lakes which affects people’s enjoyment more than water quality. Repeated nuisance algal blooms have been recorded on more than 53 Maine Lakes and another 493 are at significant risk.” The data show that each meter of water quality decline results in plummeting shoreland property values: “[A] one meter decrease in minimum

transparencies causes property values to decrease anywhere in the range of 3.1% to 8.5%”.
<https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/lakes/research.html>.

The Town of Wayne, which is home to 7 lakes and ponds, is just one example that proves this point. Revenue from shoreland property accounts for approximately 70% of the Town’s tax base. Allowing natural resources such as Androscoggin Lake to become unusable will threaten the economic stability of innumerable Maine villages and towns.

With these facts in mind, allocating \$2 million annually to protect assets with an economic value of \$14 billion is a return on investment that is hard to beat. When combined with private donations and grants, the cumulative impact of the Bottle Deposit funds will be multiplied many times over to make a real difference in reducing phosphorous in lakes, improving infrastructure to prevent runoff, and funding the research needed to improve lake health.

While there is much in today’s political climate that divides us, ALIC respectfully submits that the value Maine’s lakes and ponds provide to residents and visitors alike is beyond debate. Prudence demands that we make sound investments to protect these resources before it is too late.

Thank you.

Ted Tucci
Androscoggin Lake Improvement Corporation