

Senator, Representative, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shon Theriault, I'm the Lake Manager for Cobbsesee Lake, and I spent 26 years as a Maine Game Warden. For most of my adult life, my job was protecting Maine's woods and waters and conserving Maine's fish and wildlife. Today, my job is protecting one lake, but in many ways, the story is the same.

I want to start with something personal.

At the end of last summer, I was out on Cobbsesee early in the morning, doing what I do almost every day. I was checking shorelines, looking for invasive plants, watching water clarity, and keeping an eye on problem areas after a big rainstorm. My son was with me. The water was calm. The loons were calling. It was one of those mornings that remind you why people fall in love with Maine.

And then my Son asked a simple question: "Dad... why is the water green over there?"

He was pointing to a cove that I've known my whole life. A place where people swim. A place where the water used to be clear and should not look like this:



And I had to explain to him, in the simplest way I could, that the lake is slowly getting sick.

Not because of one bad actor. Not because of one pipe or one factory or farm, but because every heavy rain washes a little more pollution off our roads, our driveways, our lawns, our ditches, and straight into the water. Stormwater runoff. Non-point source pollution. Death by a thousand cuts.

For 26 years as a Game Warden, I responded when things were already broken, for example illegal dumping, trespassing, wildlife poaching, property damage, and habitat damage. Now, as a lake manager, I see the damage forming in real time, one rainstorm at a time, one shoreline project at a time, one untreated ditch at a time, and here's the part that keeps me up at night:

Maine's lakes are more fragile than our state parks, more interconnected, and more irreplaceable, and yet, unlike our parks, we fund them like they're an afterthought.

Cobbsesee isn't unique. This story is playing out on lakes all over Maine. Our population is less than 2 million in the winter and almost 8 million in the summer. Why a drastic increase? Clean air, clean water, and healthy habitats...but that is changing.

LD 2141 gives us something we desperately need: a stable, dedicated way to prevent pollution before it reaches the water. Using a portion of unclaimed bottle deposits to restore and protect lakes just makes sense. It's Maine-practical. It's preventative. It's responsible.

This money doesn't go to bureaucracy. It goes to fixing eroding roads and ditches, installing buffers and runoff controls, and helping towns and lake groups stop pollution before it becomes algae blooms, fish kills, and lost recreation.

Once a lake tips into decline, you don't "fix" it. You spend decades and millions trying to recover it, if you even can.

I've worn the uniform of this state. I've raised my kids on these waters. I work on this lake every single day, and I am asking you, not just as a lake manager, not just as a retired Game Warden, but as a father and a Mainer.

Please don't make us explain to the next generation why we saw this coming and didn't act.

Thank you for stepping up and serving Maine. You give our vulnerable resources a voice.

Please Vote YES on LD 2141.