

Rick Tucci
Wayne
LD 2141

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of LD 2141, An Act to Conserve the Lakes and Farmland of Maine

To: Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Rick Tucci, Summer Resident of Androscoggin Lake

Date: February 4, 2026

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Rick Tucci. I am a summer resident on Androscoggin Lake, where my family has a 60-year history. For six decades, we have called this lake home, watching our children and grandchildren learn to swim and fish in its waters. I am writing to you today because that history—and the future of this unique state resource—is under immediate threat. I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 2141.

Androscoggin Lake is currently the "canary in the coal mine" for Maine's water resources. It bears the unfortunate distinction of being the only lake in the state that receives floodwaters from a Class C river through a natural reverse-flow phenomenon. Because of this unique hydrology, we are now under siege as a result of years of toxic algae-feeding nutrients building up in the lake and lack of action to remediate the underlying causes.

In recent years, I have witnessed a heartbreaking transformation. I have stood on my waterfront in early August and watched the once-clear water turn into a thick, green "pea soup." These are not just isolated weeds; these are severe, lake-wide cyanobacteria blooms that make the water unsafe for swimming and toxic to pets.

The technical reality is that we have an "algae factory" at the bottom of our lake. Research shows that in 2023, the internal phosphorus load released from deep sediments was 1,055 kg—nearly six times the load of the previous year.

One of the many factors triggering these unprecedented outbreaks is extreme water level instability. The State-owned Dead River Dam, built in the 1930s, was designed as a one-way pollution barrier, not a level-control structure.

Today, it is failing us. Floating debris frequently jams the aging gates open, causing the lake to drain to dangerously low levels, despite the best and very dangerous to perform efforts of local volunteers to clear debris. When nutrient-rich sediments exposed by dropping water levels dry out and are then re-wet by rain or river backflow—a process known as the "Birch effect"—they release phosphorus at rates up to five times higher than normal, essentially "feeding" the algae factory.

The good news is we have an actionable pathway to eliminate this threat to the lake and public safety. We have identified potential retrofit for the dam that is ready for engineering evaluation and upon approval, construction in 2026.

LD 2141 is the essential engine for this solution. It directs unredeemed bottle deposits—public funds that currently benefit only the bottling industry—into the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund. This creates a sustainable way to provide the matching grants necessary for communities like Wayne to pursue additional innovative solutions we have identified and meet matching grant requirements for other State infrastructure funds.

Androscoggin Lake is screaming a warning to the rest of Maine. If we do not use the tools provided by LD 2141 to innovate and remediate these triggers now, the "pea soup" I see today will soon be the standard for lakes across our state.

Please support LD 2141. Help us preserve the legacy of Maine's lakes for the next 60 years and beyond.

Respectfully,

Rick Tucci Wayne, Maine