



February 22, 2026

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the ENR Committee,

I am writing this letter as President of the Friends of Sebago Lake (FOSL) in support of an amendment to LD 2187 upgrading the water quality classification of the upper Lower Androscoggin River between Worumbo and Gulf Island Pond dams from Class C to Class B.

As a longtime summer visitor to Maine and as a 34 year citizen of Maine, I and other FOSL members have witnessed the rebirth of Maine's Rivers. From my own youth in the 1960's, I can remember the Presumpscot and Androscoggin Rivers were open sewers. At that time, I remember a neighbor of ours in Standish, Maine, was a civic leader for the City of Westbrook. We would complain to this neighbor about the smell of the Presumpscot River as my parents drove over this whitish colored waterway. Our neighbor would respond that the stench was "the smell of money".

The City of Westbrook opposed all efforts to clean up the river citing that the costs would bring economic ruin to the area. Thanks to the Clean Water Act, the Presumpscot River is now being restored after many battles over the years.

The tables are turned now in that the "non smell" of the river is the "smell of money". Businesses have flocked to Westbrook because the river is so much cleaner. Westbrook has become a very desirable place to live. Its fishing and recreational potential is great. With a reclassification, the Lewiston/Auburn area has the same potential.

The entire Lower Androscoggin from Gulf Island Pond to Merrymeeting Bay has the opportunity to enjoy an economic stimulus from improved water quality classifications that could provide the region with benefits the Presumpscot River from Sebago to Westbrook is already enjoying. It just makes good economic sense.

Maine is unique in its river assets. There are no rivers and river estuaries in the United States that compare to those in Maine in regards to water quality, potential fisheries, and adequate year round flows . Dams with excessive flow regulation, water extraction, irrigation, diversion and pollution have rendered other rivers especially in their lower reaches, to be inferior to those in Maine.

It is a fact of life our state depends upon summer visitor commerce including out of state residents who own second homes here in Maine. They invest in Maine because of quality of life and the environment. The property taxes these second homes generate are vital for funding Maine schools. In other regions of the country, just close proximity to a recreational and protected waterway increases the value of a property and the taxes it pays to support municipalities.

By locking in improved water quality or further improving quality, Maine has potential superlatives in its river assets. Please help us maximize these potential attributes! We are in competition with other states for summer visitor dollars and by locking in improved water quality conditions and striving for complete river restorations we can out-compete other states for tourist income while providing Maine citizens with the highest quality of life experience possible.

Please, I hope the ENR Committee (and full legislature) will see the wisdom in upgrading the classification on this next section of the Lower Androscoggin (as you did the lowest section a few years ago) from Class C to Class B, locking in improved water quality and eliminating the room for degradation now existing.

Sincerely,

Roger Wheeler

President, Friends of Sebago Lake

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President, Friends of Sebago Lake

10 Ryan Ave.

Ipswich, Ma.

01928

Tel: 207-256-7525

Email: friendsofsebago@yahoo.com