



January 30, 2023

Honorable Stacy Brenner, Senate Chair  
Honorable Lori Gramlich, House Chair  
Joint Legislative Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Subject: Support of LD 164 An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources:

The Kennebec Water District (KWD) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 164 An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund.

KWD supplies drinking water to more than 20,000 people in the Waterville area including to the communities of Waterville, Winslow, Fairfield, Benton, and Vassalboro. KWD has used China Lake as its sole source of supply since 1905. In 1909 KWD began purchasing shoreland property around the West Basin of China Lake to protect the quality of this precious resource. Since then, KWD has actively worked to preserve the water quality of China Lake. However, due to nutrient pollution (predominantly phosphorus), China Lake began experiencing regular and widespread algal blooms in the 1980s. (Nutrient pollution is largely the result of human activity in the watershed including poorly designed, constructed, or malfunctioning septic systems, overuse of phosphorus-based fertilizers, shoreline encroachment, poor sitework construction practices, and agricultural activities. Climate change and extreme weather events can exacerbate the transportation of nutrients into the Lake.)

China Lake's water quality degradation gained national notoriety in the late 1980s when the phrase "China Lake Syndrome" began to be used to describe the phenomenon of a pristine lake deteriorating to one with regular algal blooms due to phosphorus pollution.

While much progress has been made over the past 30 years, China Lake continues to experience regular algal blooms, limited water clarity, and anoxic conditions in the deeper parts of the lake. Considering the 27 square miles of drainage area around the lake, and more than six square miles of lake surface area, additional external financial resources are necessary to restore China Lake to historic water quality standards.

The Lake Restoration and Protection Fund, if funded, would provide an opportunity to access needed financial resources to maintain and improve water quality in China Lake. Improvements in source water quality results in greater consistency in KWD's treatment processes and advances KWD's mission of protecting public health.

We strongly urge the Environment and Natural Resources Committee to pass LD 164. Please contact me via phone at (207) 861-1146 or by e-mail at [Rbickford@kennebecwater.org](mailto:Rbickford@kennebecwater.org), if you have any questions.

Yours for safe drinking water,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Bickford', written in a cursive style.

Robert Bickford

Water Quality Manager – Kennebec Water District