

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, Members of the Joint Standing Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Paul Johnson. I am a resident of Oakland. Before retiring in 2005 I was the Regional Fishery Biologist in the Moosehead Lake Region, a region that encompasses many of the waters that will be protected by this legislation.

Some history behind this legislation. You will note in **Section 1, Commissioners' authority**, that the dams on the outlet of Sebec Lake and on the Sebec River in Milo, and the dams at the outlets of Schoodic and Seboeis lakes, are listed before the dams which are under consideration today. In 2011, legislation was proposed and adopted to protect Sebec Lake, with an outlet flowing into the Piscataquis River. That was followed in 2012 by legislation which afforded protection for both Schoodic and Seboeis lakes, with outlets also flowing into the Piscataquis River. The legislation responded to public and professional concern that the Penobscot River Restoration Project's plans for a bypass around the Howland Dam would allow Northern Pike access into the Piscataquis River, and on into the three lakes.

At that time Memoranda of Agreement required that vertical barriers be maintained in the Penobscot River's West Enfield Dam's fishway, and the Piscataquis River's Brown's Mill Dam's fishway. Those MOAs were intended to prevent access for invasive species, especially Northern Pike, further upstream in the Penobscot and Piscataquis rivers. Those MOAs were the reason both dams under consideration today were not included in the previous legislation. It appears that the MOA for the fishway in the West Enfield Dam has been abandoned, I might add with no public review or notice, and the barrier in the Brown's Mill Dam fishway is now in jeopardy.

LD 1049 addresses current concerns that fish passage is being considered for the Medway Dam on the West Branch of the Penobscot River, along with removal of the vertical barrier in the Brown's Mill Dam fishway on the Piscataquis River. This legislation requires that there will be no changes in these 2 dams allowing invasive species access over either dam. Its adoption incurs no immediate financial cost. It will, however, prevent significant and irreversible environmental costs by helping to prevent invasive species from gaining access into the headwaters of two major watersheds where inland fishery management prioritizes protection for native, wild salmonid populations.

You have heard what stands to be lost in the Penobscot River's West Branch watershed if Northern Pike gain access to it. At stake in the Piscataquis River watershed above Dover-Foxcroft are:

- 21 miles of the main stem of the Piscataquis River
- 26 miles of the Piscataquis River's East and West Branches
- 17 miles of Kingsbury Stream
- More than 60 miles of their small tributaries with essential spawning and nursery habitats and summer refugia from warmer temperatures in the main stems.

All are important to ongoing Atlantic salmon restoration efforts. All are important to maintaining native, wild brook trout populations.

The Piscataquis River and small ponds in its watershed above the Brown's Mill Dam have very little suitable habitat for alewives or shad. If eels are a concern, they have a history of negotiating dams that obstruct other species. With the barrier in the Brown's Mill Dam fishway Atlantic salmon will continue to have access to the upper reaches of the Piscataquis, where there is suitable spawning and nursery habitat for them. The upper river and its tributaries will continue to support populations of wild, native brook trout in the absence of a major predator.

Allowing an invasive species to gain access to the upper Piscataquis watershed or upstream over barriers in any Maine river is irresponsible, and contrary to IF&W's Fisheries and Hatcheries Strategic Management Plan which states that PREVENTION IS ALWAYS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE. Preventing access by Northern Pike or other invasive species to the upper watershed of the Piscataquis River should be among the highest priorities for all interests in conservation.

In offering my support for LD 1049 I want to make it clear that I am not opposed to anadromous fish restoration in watersheds where Maine's fisheries, and especially native, wild salmonids, will not be threatened by non-native invasive species. However, as a fishery biologist and a Maine citizen deeply concerned over our natural resources and their future, I cannot support any action that has the potential to increase the distribution of invasive fish species in Maine waters. MOAs, MOUs and inhouse agreements are temporary, require no public involvement in creating or amending them, and have a history of being broken. Enactment of LD 1049 will require public notice, the opportunity for public involvement, and Legislative approval for any changes that will permit invasive species to move upstream at the six dams included in it. Enactment of LD 1049 will send a message that Maine people continue to value very highly the natural resources with which we have been blessed, and that we will take all reasonable steps to protect them.

I respectfully urge that you give LD 1049 your serious consideration, and a unanimous "ought to pass" recommendation.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak before your committee.

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the case study around the Belgrade pike introduction determined that nearly half the subsequent introductions were bucket bios and half were dispersion. So, every time a new population is established, it creates another source for people to move them across the landscape.

# Northern Pike

Voracious predators  
on young salmon  
and trout

In Alaska, most northern pike occur naturally north and west of the Alaska range.

In their natural range, northern pike are a valued sport fish.

However, when transported illegally out of their natural range, northern pike can destroy salmon and trout fisheries.

This 14-inch pike was able to entirely consume this 10-inch rainbow trout.



This 18-inch pike consumed over a dozen juvenile silver salmon.

A message brought to you by



Do your part ...

Do not stock northern pike