

# Lakes Environmental Association

*Protecting Maine's lakes since 1970*

April 27, 2023

**Re: Support for LD 1342: "An Act to Increase Funding for the Prevention and Control of Invasive Aquatic Species"**

Dear Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

My name is Colin Holme and I am the Director of the Lakes Environmental Association. Our organization is headquartered in Bridgton and we directly work on waterbodies in the upper Sebago and Saco River watersheds. We have the largest milfoil control program in the state and hire, train, and oversee around 35 Courtesy Boat Inspectors each year.

Last year, we spent \$199,798 on removing invasive milfoil from Sebago Lake, Long Lake, Brandy Pond, the Songo River, and Sebago Cove. We have made amazing progress in these areas and have functionally eliminated this species in some of the busiest inland waterways, marinas, and boat launches in the state. Of that total, \$50,600 was from a competitive grant from through the MDEP. The remaining \$149,198 we had to raise on our own to pull and kill this invasive plant from these publicly owned waters. We are currently receiving more funding from out-of-state foundations, (whose trustees have seen the full impact of unchecked invasive aquatic plants), then we receive from the Maine DEP.

This lopsided funding burden is not unique to our organization. Last year, the state spent \$654,000 on control of invasive aquatic plants, while non-profits (who do the vast majority of control work) spent an additional \$879,000.

When it comes to invasives prevention, the story is the same. In 2022, non-profits across Maine spent an additional \$664,000 to fund Courtesy Boat Inspector programs. The Maine DEP spent around \$430,000 in prevention programs.

The state is already relying on non-profits to do the bulk of prevention and control, with the financial burden for non-profits growing every year. While this makes the program very efficient from a state budget perspective, it will not be effective in the long-term if funding does not increase as costs and wages continue to go up.

What is most alarming about the current funding stream, is what is not being done.



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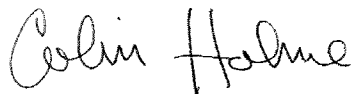
According to a risk analysis from MDEP staff, 234 waterbodies are highly vulnerable to invasive species in the state and 213 of these waterbodies have no boat inspection program at all. Prevention programs are the most effective use of funding and these waterbodies are completely unprotected. Running an efficient boat inspection program on these waterbodies on weekends alone during the summer months, would likely cost an additional 1.5 million dollars.

There is also minimal funding for early detection of invasive species. Finding emerging colonies of invasive plants before they become established, can save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in control costs. And, those costs are only going to grow, like the plants themselves, each year.

Motorboats are the primary vector for spreading invasive aquatic species and the proposed fee increases are modest and insignificant compared to the cost of owning and operating a motorboat. This additional funding is absolutely necessary if we want to keep our lakes and ponds free of invasive plants.

**Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 1342.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colin Holme".

Colin Holme  
Executive Director  
Lakes Environmental Association