

Monday May 1, 2023

To: Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1473, An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources

My name is Kevin Gagne and I live in Minot and I work for the City of Lewiston, as the Deputy Director of Utilities for Lewiston Public Works. I am essentially the Water Superintendent for Lewiston Water. I have worked for the City of Lewiston for nearly 25 years protecting Lake Auburn drinking water through protecting the Lake Auburn watershed, the lake and our treatment process to provide safe drinking water to Lewiston and Auburn water customers. I am speaking as an environmental engineer and the drinking water utility manager for Lewiston water to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1473.

A waiver from drinking water filtration ensures that the water utility is meeting very high water quality standards – so a filter isn't needed and there is enough control and protection in the watershed and lake to maintain that high water quality. Loss of a drinking water waiver means a possible doubling of water rates to customers.

For over 30 years, the City of Lewiston, the Auburn Water District and the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission (LAWPC) have worked collaboratively to protect Lake Auburn water quality and our drinking water waivers from filtration- providing safe drinking water at a reasonable rate.

We have and will continue to work collaboratively with other utilities, towns, state and federal agencies to protect Lake Auburn as our drinking water.

I find it interesting that we have seen some intense rain over the last 24 hours and I would like you to observe all the little streams in your neighborhood or the brooks you pass on you way to work or as you came here today. Look at the rivers as they swell with almost 5 inches of rain and consider that the brown water you see in the brook, stream or river is not 'natural' erosion coming from undisturbed forests or meadows but likely a result of erosion from a house or a subdivision, a golf course, a road or other human built structures where pristine forests and meadows once were.

Once a wooded forest or a meadow is destroyed and it erodes, you cannot take the pollution back.

In 2022, LD 2003 passed. Unless the bill before you passes, an unintended consequence of LD 2003 would be to actually introduce more pollution to lake watersheds. Through increased human activity in undisturbed areas in a watershed, there is increased pollution. More dwelling units, means more driveways, walkway, mowed lawns, and more storm runoff with more pollution to the lakes. This state law to increase housing could also threatens our drinking water if it does not take into account the few water sources-lakes that are subject to a filtration waiver.

I am asking you to pass LD 1473 that would protect our drinking water from the pollution of increased housing. LD 1473 would only apply to sensitive lakes and watersheds that are specific for drinking water lakes with waivers from filtration. Other communities and other areas outside the sensitive lake watersheds would not be affected can still benefit from LD2003 with increased housing, but please – not at the expense of our drinking water.

I am available for any questions and can be available in future discussions.

Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 1473 and protect our lakes that are our drinking water! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted
Kevin A. Gagne