

Testimony in favor of LD 1473

An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senate Chair Brenner, House Chair Gramlich and Members of the Joint Standing Committee, my name is Peggy Volock. I live in Auburn and work in Lewiston.

Lake Auburn is the water source for Maine's second largest population area and includes two large hospitals, numerous schools and businesses, as well as private homes. We should not do anything that endangers the quality of our drinking water. Lake Auburn is a treasure that must be preserved.

Even though Lake Auburn is listed on the Maine DEP Chapter 502 List of "Lakes Most at Risk from New Development" it is being threatened by several locally proposed measures.

1. Revised septic standards that will have the effect of allowing more buildable house sites in the Lake Auburn watershed. These would be doubled by LD 2003.
2. Attempting to rewrite watershed boundaries which would allow a 1100-unit housing development near the shore of Lake Auburn.

The Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission requested Comprehensive Environmental Inc. (CEI) to conduct a peer review of the FB Environmental Associates (FBE) analysis of the quality of Lake Auburn's water. This was completed in 2021.

CEI agreed with the findings of FBE that "Lake Auburn cannot bear additional nutrient loads without diminishing water quality...and found no net environmental, economic, or social benefit supporting expansion of development in the Lake Auburn watershed."¹

Only 0.5% of the earth's water is available fresh water. Water is more precious than gold and cannot be taken for granted. I sincerely hope my grandchildren will have fresh water to drink.

I urge you to pass LD1473 and exempt water sources that have been granted a filtration waiver from the development permitted by LD2003.

Thank you for your time and service.

1. CEI Review and Findings

Peer Review of FB Environmental Associates: A Regulatory, Environmental, and Economic Analysis of Water Supply Protection in Auburn, Maine dated October 2021 and the supplemental Lake Auburn Model Technic

The Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission requested CEI to perform a peer review of a recent study and technical memorandum prepared by FB Environmental Associates (FBE) that evaluated local regulatory scenarios and their impact on the water quality of Lake Auburn. The purpose of the review is to evaluate the conclusions drawn as they pertain to development and water quality impacts on Lake Auburn.

FBE's 2021 study concluded that Lake Auburn is nearing its assimilative capacity for nutrient load (even with the partial alum treatment) and cannot bear additional nutrient loads without

diminishing water quality and its associated benefits. FBE found no net environmental economic, or social benefit supporting expansion of development in the Lake Auburn watershed. FBE also concluded that even if reduced development through conservation or other means is achieved in the headwater towns, any additional development in Auburn has an outsized negative impact since its drainage area goes directly to the lake. CEI agrees with these findings and considered these in its evaluation.