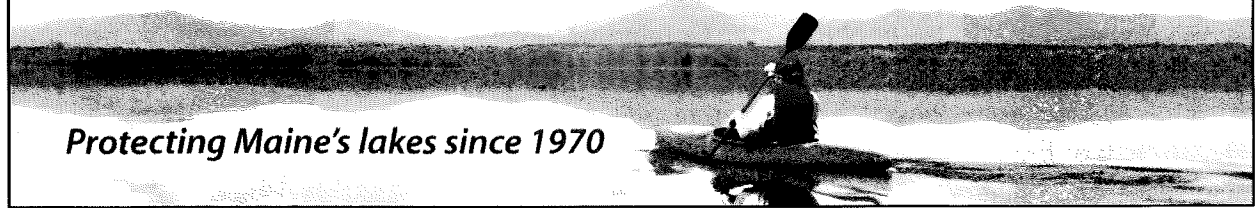


Lakes Environmental Association



January 31, 2024

Re: Support for LD 2141: "An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State"

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 one of the largest milfoil control programs in the state and hire, train, and oversee around 35 Courtesy Boat Inspectors each year.

Our organization strongly supports LD 2141.

The lakes of Maine are gems in the state for our residents and visitors alike. They improve the quality of life of people living and visiting our state and are year-round revenue generators for our economy.

We have a lot to lose as these lakes and ponds succumb to invasive species. If you haven't been to a waterbody like Lake Arrowhead, I encourage you to go and see what a lake infested with variable leaf milfoil looks like. This is not the future we all want. But this is what it will be unless we start to invest in prevention and control programs and look at different strategies to stop these species from spreading.

This bill provides not just needed funding for this work, it also directs the MDEP and MIFW to recommend stricter standards for watercraft inspections on lakes with invasive aquatic species, and asks both agencies to review surface use restriction policies.

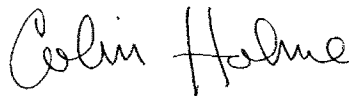
Right now, invasive species like milfoil are moving out of infested lakes within our state attached to boat trailers and propellers. These lakes are a source of new infestations for other lakes in the state. This bill provides an opportunity to address this issue. One way we could do this is by requiring mandatory inspections by Courtesy Boat Inspectors already on duty (it is a voluntary inspection now) or requiring a boater who is leaving an infested waterbody to self-inspect. These solutions are within our reach and should be implemented before more lakes succumb to invasive species.



As I have stated in past testimonies to the Committee, the majority of on-the-ground control and prevention programs for invasive aquatic species in the state of Maine is done by non-profits. This work is currently underfunded. The important statewide work to control these species by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife is also vastly underfunded.

Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 2141.

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