



30 Mile River Watershed Association  
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RE: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **LD 2141**:

**An Act to Enhance Protections for and Better Address Invasive Aquatic Plant Infestations in Inland Waters of the State**

January 31, 2024

Dear Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and Distinguished Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of LD 2141.

My name is Lidie Robbins and I am the Executive Director of the 30 Mile River Watershed Association. This watershed encompasses over 20 waterbodies in Central Maine. We are a coalition of seven towns, nine lake associations and two conservation organizations. Our mission is to work as a community for clean and healthy lakes, ponds and streams in our watershed.

30 Mile fully supports LD 2141. This act will provide much-needed funding for invasive plant remediation efforts, reduce invasive plant fragments leaving infested waters, and reduce the likelihood of new invasive plant infestations that can devastate our lakes. **Now is the time to commit more resources to doing the work that is needed to keep our lakes clean and healthy.**

One of the primary reasons that 30 Mile formed in 2008 was to protect our waters from invasive plants. For the organization's first twelve years, our work with invasive aquatic plants all focused on prevention, as there were no known invasives in our watershed. Then in the summer of 2020, variable milfoil, the most common invasive aquatic plant in Maine, was found in Androscoggin Lake. Since then, for three full seasons, we have been fighting the invasive milfoil to prevent its spread, both within the lake and to other lakes, with the ultimate goal of eradication. We are managing the infestation as aggressively as we can with the tools available to us. Our paid staff survey the infested area by kayak, 40 hours a week, to locate individual invasive plants, which are then removed by a trained SCUBA diver on our team. We are making progress, but we aren't yet close to eradication.

Last summer, the invasive aquatic plant swollen bladderwort was found in Tilton Pond, a water body at the top of our watershed. This infestation threatens many lakes and ponds downstream. Now we must find the resources to fight this infestation, too.

A valuable tool in our effort on Androscoggin has been a Surface Use Restriction. Marked with buoys and signage, this restricted zone encompasses an area where we have found many of the invasive plants. Invasive plants are easily broken, and a boat prop making contact can break the plant into countless fragments that could each grow into a new plant somewhere else. Even a fishing line can fragment a plant. Our boat inspectors who work at the public launch near the infested area are able to tell boaters that by law they must not enter that restricted area. Our inspectors then observe that when educated about the law, these boaters do in fact stay away. While the surface use restriction is not perfect, as our CBIs don't reach everyone, it does keep the majority of boaters and fishermen outside of the area. While many people won't follow recommendations, most people will follow the law.

Maine has a long history of providing public access to our Great Ponds. But now we live in a very different time, where invasive species threaten to ruin our lakes. Management practices must adapt to these new times. When we know that an area of a lake is infested with invasive plants that can easily be spread by human activity, it's common sense that we would try to keep people away from that area, to keep other areas from becoming infested too. A Surface Use Restriction is a common-sense tool that works. The Department has been hesitant to use this tool, and it is time to reassess this practice.

The thousands of lakes and ponds in our state that we all cherish are a public resource to be enjoyed by all. However, the reality is that they are a public resource until there is a problem, and then it's a private problem to fix. Because the resources in the state are so limited, it has been left up to private groups, like our organization, to manage the problems likely created by public use. Our organization has had to bear the burden of raising the money needed to fight the infestations, and the costs are growing every year.

The State needs to take stronger action now to support this work and protect our lakes, or they won't be here for future Mainers to enjoy.

The communities in our watershed, and throughout Maine, depend upon the health of these lakes for our local economy, our tax base and our quality of life. Losing our lakes would truly be devastating to our state. This act provides an opportunity to invest in a better future.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2141

Thank you,

Lidie Robbins  
Executive Director