



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.

Submitted to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

January 31, 2024

Senator LaFountain and Representative Landry
Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

Good afternoon! Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bill. My name is Peter Meulendyk and I am a resident of Manchester, Maine. I am here on behalf of the Cobbosseecontee Lake Association (CLA), of which I am a member, and serve as its Vice President. We are pleased to present these comments in full support of LD 2141. We especially want to thank, Representative Hasenfus for bringing this important legislation forward.

Cobbosseecontee Lake, only 5 miles from the state house, has been the only known public body of water in Maine with Eurasian Watermilfoil. This is an aggressive invasive plant that poses a serious threat to the State's inland lakes, ponds, and waterways. Once it spreads in a large lake, it is virtually impossible to eradicate. It grows rapidly reproducing primarily through fragmentation. The impacts of infestations have the potential to be devastating. When dense mats form EWM harms recreation, water quality, native aquatic plants, fish, wildlife, and shorefront property values.

The Cobbossee Lake Association's objective, together with DEP and the FOCW, is to contain this IAP through constant surveying, identification, removal, or herbicide treatment. We are very concerned about the spread within the lake and possibly to other lakes. In 2022 there were 3 areas in Cobbossee with EWM.

Despite significant efforts and investment, in 2023 there were 15 areas with EWM, including plants found below the outlet dam in Cobbossee Stream. All known plants in the lake were removed or treated. My understanding is the DEP is planning treatment on Cobbossee Stream.

The 5 towns bordering Cobbossee have stepped up and increased municipal funding for more CBI inspections and surveys. Our organization has strengthened and grown. CLA has raised funds from the broader lake community sufficient to maintain a reserve to respond quickly when an infestation occurs. However, these funds will not last long if this invasive plant, or other invasive species that we know are out there, become more widely dispersed.

The State of Maine has “ownership” of all inland waters and controls access. The State needs to recognize the rapidly increasing economic and environmental threat that invasive species present to its lakes and streams and meet its responsibility to help address the problem. Lakes generate \$3.5 billion annually for the Maine economy, along with 52,000 jobs. Tax revenues are significant from shoreline properties in many communities. An invasive EWM infestation can result in reduced property values by up to 19%. Maine lakes, and the many lake associations trying to preserve and protect the lakes, need the provisions provided within LD 2141. A lake with a serious infestation could benefit from the \$2 million addition to the DEP IAP and Species Nuisance Fund. The review and appropriate use of Surface Use Restrictions and enforcement are needed to prohibit watercraft and swimmers from entering the most seriously infested areas. Stronger controls are required to prevent watercraft on the infested lakes from spreading plants to neighboring waters.

Time is critical and we are asking Maine’s government to act in a much bigger way. Your support for this bill should be viewed as an investment in the future of all lakes and ponds in Maine and for all who use them. We earnestly implore you to vote OTP for LD 2141.