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 CommitteeJanuary 31, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair LaFountain, Chair Landry, and Distinguished Members of the InlandFisheries and Wildlife Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of LD 2141. My name is Susan Gallo, and I am the ExecutiveDirector of Maine Lakes. Our membership organization includes more than 6,000 supporters and volunteers as well as over 80 Lake Associations. We are dedicated to our mission of promoting, protecting, and enhancing lake water quality and habitat, and of preserving the ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of Maine's lakes for everyone.

Invasive aquatic plants pose a serious risk to Maine's inland waters. They outcompete native plants, with potentially devastating effects on aquatic ecosystems, water quality,native wildlife and fisheries, recreational opportunities, and property values.

Maine has so far <u>not</u> seen the more devastating invasive species outbreaks plaguing our neighboring states to the west and south.

Is that just luck?

Absolutely not.

Maine residents and visitors, municipal budgets, property owners, summer camps, anglers, swimmers, and boaters have all benefited from more than two decades of hard work by Maine's lake organizations, lake associations, and many thousands of volunteers and paid staff, as well as by the Departments of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Environmental Protection and by legislators like you who have repeatedly supported this work, both with funds and with forward-thinking, proactive lake policies.

But we are coming ever closer to the "worst-case scenarios" we see in nearby states.

And the risks continue to grow.

- In September of 2022, Zebra Mussels were found just 40 miles across the border in Quebec.
- In 2023, Swollen Bladderwort, a recently listed invasive species, was found on 5 Maine lakes.
- In 2023, Spiny Water Flea, an invasive invertebrate, was discovered in the deep waters of Winnipesaukee, in New Hampshire.
- Thirrty-nine Maine waterbodies now battle some type of invasive infestation.
- Vermont is already home to several infestations of invasive Asian Clams and Zebra Mussels.

The battle against invasive spread is reaching a tipping point where the needs will exponentially outweigh the resources available.

- Two Maine lakes (Cobbosee and Arrowhead) are suffering the degradation from three invasive plant infestations, reaching a scope and scale that communities, advocates, and agencies cannot manage without additional resources.
- DEP has documented needs of $360K for Courtesy Boat Inspection Programs, $507K for plant removal programs, and $40K for other invasive aquatic projects from the 41 organizations it works with. These are annual, unmet needs that exist today. These needs will only grow as invasives spread.
- Nonprofits in Maine already raise more than a million dollars each year over and above funds provided by the state in order to combat invasive spread.

It is more important than ever that we not just maintain our invasive species risk reduction programs, but that we make them stronger. And LD 2141 will help us do that by:

1. **Appropriating $2,000,000 to the Invasive Aquatic Plant and Nuisance Species Fund.** The funds will support inspections, prevention programs, containment, eradication, and management activities. While these funds are desperately needed, the one-time nature of this appropriation will mean more requests for funds in the future. Improving and expanding sustainable funding for AIS must go hand-in-hand with this one-time allocation.

2. **Strengthening watercraft inspection protocols.** Recognizing that boats coming out of heavily infested waters pose a greater risk of invasive spread than those coming out of other waters, the bill asks IFW and DEP to assess if current protocols are adequate for these waterbodies, and to develop guidelines for stronger protocols where needed.

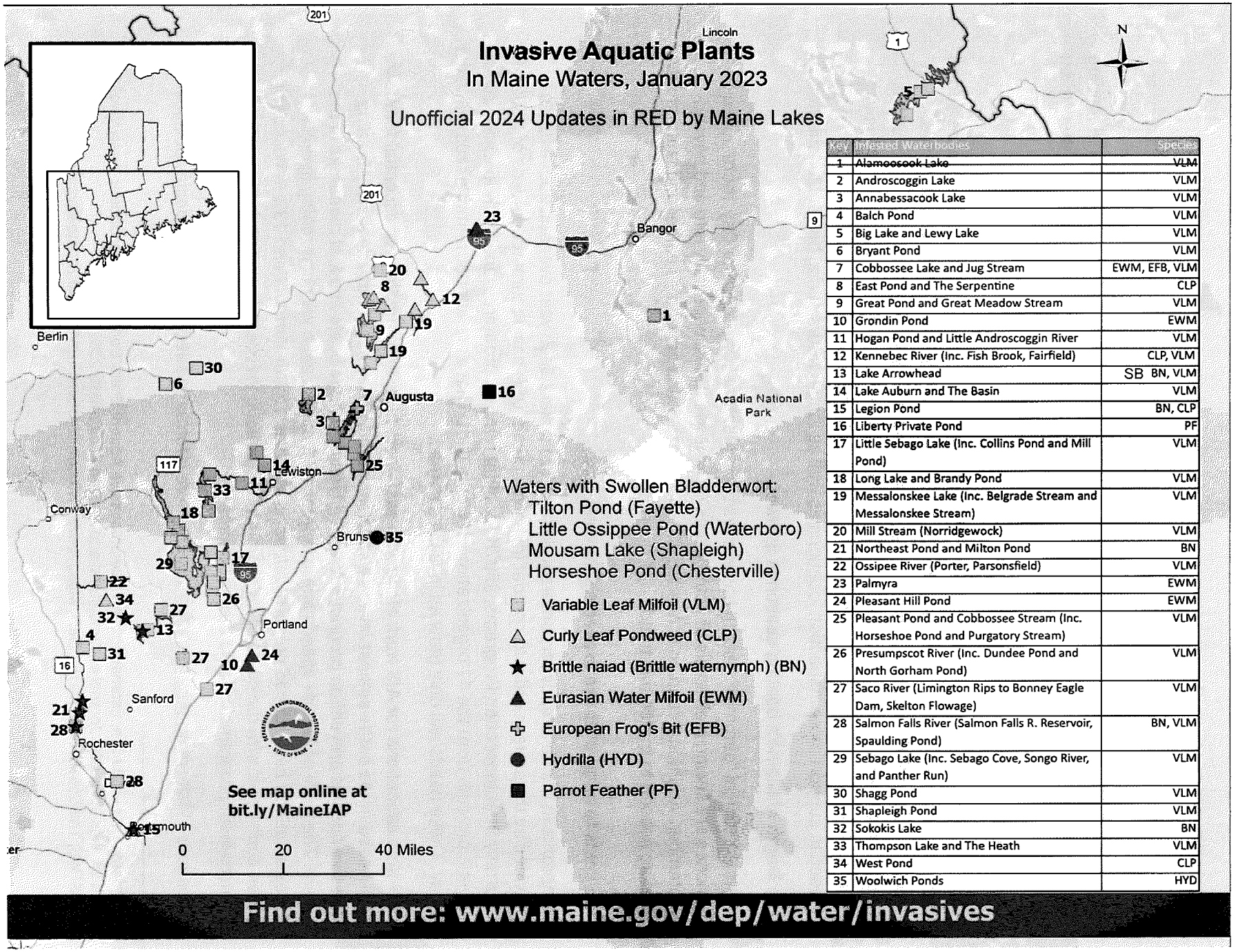
3. **Review policies and procedures for surface use restrictions**. Boats passing through areas with invasive infestations are more likely to pick up plant fragments and transport those fragments to new lakes. Surface restrictions in areas of the worst infestations are a common-sense tool that can reduce that spread.

The provisions of this bill, along with other increases to invasive species funding mechanisms, are essential for the state of Maine to keep up with the increased costs and expansion of invasive species risk reduction work, and to assure our outdoor economy, our sporting heritage and the health of our lakes continue to thrive in the future.

Invasive Aquatic Plants

In Maine Waters, January 2023

Unofficial 2024 Updates in RED by Maine Lakes



Key	Infested Waterbodies	Species
~~1~~	~~Alamoosook Lake~~	~~VLM~~
2	Androscoggin Lake	VLM
3	Annabessacook Lake	VLM
4	Balch Pond	VLM
5	Big Lake and Lewy Lake	VLM
6	Bryant Pond	VLM
7	Cobbossee Lake and Jug Stream	EWM, EFB, VLM
8	East Pond and The Serpentine	CLP
9	Great Pond and Great Meadow Stream	VLM
10	Grondin Pond	EWM
11	Hogan Pond and Little Androscoggin River	VLM
12	Kennebec River (Inc. Fish Brook, Fairfield)	CLP, VLM
13	Lake Arrowhead	SB BN, VLM
14	Lake Auburn and The Basin	VLM
15	Legion Pond	BN, CLP
16	Liberty Private Pond	PF
17	Little Sebago Lake (Inc. Collins Pond and Mill Pond)	VLM
18	Long Lake and Brandy Pond	VLM
19	Messalonskee Lake (Inc. Belgrade Stream and Messalonskee Stream)	VLM
20	Mill Stream (Norridgewock)	VLM
21	Northeast Pond and Milton Pond	BN
22	Ossipee River (Porter, Parsonsfield)	VLM
23	Palmyra	EWM
24	Pleasant Hill Pond	EWM
25	Pleasant Pond and Cobbossee Stream (Inc. Horseshoe Pond and Purgatory Stream)	VLM
26	Presumpscot River (Inc. Dundee Pond and North Gorham Pond)	VLM
27	Saco River (Limington Rips to Bonney Eagle Dam, Skelton Flowage)	VLM
28	Salmon Falls River (Salmon Falls R. Reservoir, Spaulding Pond)	BN, VLM
29	Sebago Lake (Inc. Sebago Cove, Songo River, and Panther Run)	VLM
30	Shagg Pond	VLM
31	Shapleigh Pond	VLM
32	Sokokis Lake	BN
33	Thompson Lake and The Heath	VLM
34	West Pond	CLP
35	Woolwich Ponds	HYD

Find out more: www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives

Why Do We Need More Funds to Reduce Risks from Aquatic Invasives Species?

Prevention programs cost more.

A competitive job market, where teenagers and young adults can make upwards of $20/hour or more at fast food chains or big box stores, has made hiring for invasives work more difficult, especially as the very real cost of gas, groceries, and vehicles continue to rise. Additional funding is needed to pay staff and cover their expenses as they do critical invasive control and prevention work.

More boat inspection locations are needed.

The number of boat inspection locations continues to grow, as invasives reach more lakes and as Maine's tourism economy flourishes around clean lakes and their surrounding communities, especially after COVID made boating an even more popular recreational past time. Inspections literally save Maine lakes (and camp owners, boaters, and lake users) by discovering invasive species on boats moving from infested waters (largely from out of state). Additional funding is needed to support more inspection locations as well as longer hours during busier launchtimes.

The length of Maine's boating season is growing.

While the typical "summer" season has always been Memorial Day to Labor Day, more public boat launches are seeing high levels of activity outside of these dates, especially into and beyond September. Additional funding is needed to expand inspection schedules earlier and later into the boating season to match this trend.

The costs to nonprofits are exceeding their capacity.

Nonprofits in Maine already raise more than a million dollars each year over and above funds provided by the state in order to combat invasive spread. DEP has documented needs of $360K for Courtesy Boat Inspection Programs, $507K for plant removal programs, and $40K for other invasive aquatic projects from the 41 organizations it works with. These are annual, unmet needs that exist today. These needs will only grow as invasives spread.

One-time allocations for AIS work along with sustained, long-term funding are essential for Maine to succeed in the battle against invasive species spread. The cost of not adequately funding invasive species prevention programs today will result in huge costs and lost resources in the future. The state of Florida spends approximately $32 million each year controlling hydrilla.[1] Eurasian milfoil has reduced property values as much as 16% in Vermont and 13% in Wisconsin.[2] When contrasted with the costs of managing future aquatic invaders, investing in prevention and management programs today is a smart choice.

Questions? Visit www.lakes.me/advocacy for more information about invasive species policies.

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[1] Adams DC and DJ Lee. Estimating the Value of Invasive Aquatic Plant Control: A Bioeconomic Analysis of 13 PublicLakes in Florida. Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics. 2007.

[2] USFWS, The Cost of Invasive Species, https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/pythonpdf/costofinvasivesfactsheet.pdf