

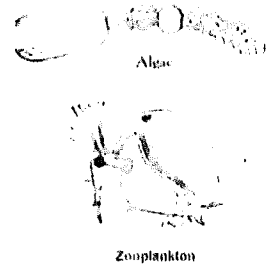
# COBBOSSEE WATERSHED DISTRICT

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*Maine's first regional lake management district*



## COBBOSSEE WATERSHED DISTRICT TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 296: **An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection, Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Hello:

My name is Wendy Dennis. I am a resident of the Town of Winthrop. I am here as a limnologist testifying on behalf of the Cobbossee Watershed District in **SUPPORT** of LD 296. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Cobbossee Watershed District, or CWD, is a special-purpose district authorized by the Maine Legislature in 1971 to protect, improve and conserve the 28 lakes & ponds within the "Cobbossee Watershed". The municipalities with lake shorefront in the watershed provide our primary funding. Those municipalities' economies greatly depend on the lakes for both property tax revenue – in one town the lakefront taxes on one lake constitute 70% of the property tax base – and also for revenue from tourism, vital to offset the loss of manufacturing income.

**The Lake Restoration and Protection Fund was established 44 years ago in 1981, and was used to restore and protect Maine lakes for a few years when funds were actually appropriated.**  
Example: In 1986 the Cobbossee Watershed District received money from this fund to implement one of the most successful lake restoration projects in the state of Maine. It was an alum treatment of Cochnewagon Lake in Monmouth, Kennebec County.

- ✓ Water quality improvements were immediate.
- ✓ Algae blooms that had turned the lake pea-soup green were eliminated.
- ✓ The lake no longer violated its State of Maine water quality classification.
- ✓ Property values increased.
- ✓ Local economic development increased.
- ✓ Investments were made in public access to the lake and lakeside recreation programs & facilities; this enhanced the appeal of the town as a place to live and to visit from other towns and states.
- ✓ The lake ecosystem regained biological diversity.
- ✓ Success.

Alum treatments are expensive. The Cochnewagon Lake treatment was collaboratively funded by pooling federal, state, regional, and town financial resources. The State Lake Restoration & Protection Funds were critical to leverage other monies and reach the goal. A few years later the Fund was zero-funded for more than three decades.


Thankfully, due to Rep. Bridgeo's initiative and the support of the ENR Committee, the fund came back to life two years ago. The actual amount of money appropriated was extremely small. It was a welcome start but may only fund one project. The \$2,000,000 proposed in LD296 for each of the next two years could make a bigger difference.

Testimony submitted by Cobbossee Watershed District in SUPPORT of LD 269:  
An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection, Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund

\$4,000,000 is by no means excessive, however. There is much work to be done to save our lakes. The number of lakes needing alum treatments is greater than when the Fund was established. At perhaps one million \$ each on average, alum treatments could easily deplete the fund.

Erosion and stormwater pollution is a growing problem in the watersheds of hundreds of lakes in this state, while runoff control work to keep sediment and phosphorus out of the lakes has become noticeably more expensive in recent years. In 2023 we recorded the third highest annual precipitation in our 49 years of record in the Cobbossee Watershed. Several very large and intense rainstorms ripped chunks of shorefront property into lakes, caused torrents of muddy brown water to surge through road ditches and discharge to the lakes, and resulted in elevated sediment and phosphorus levels, decreased water clarity and increased algal growth in most of our lakes - effects that were not only visually noticeable but also scientifically measured. CWD only had resources to conduct remediation projects in two of our 28 lake watersheds – at an approximate cost of \$120,000. None of that money was from the state. It was from municipalities; individual property owners; the federal government.

I cannot overemphasize that the amount of money available to take care of our lakes is far below what is needed and well below the ecological and economic benefit they provide for all. The CWD strongly supports LD296. Thank you and I am happy to take any questions.



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