



Town of Surry

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March 31, 2025

132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

An Act Regarding Dam Ownership LD 531

Sponsored by:

- Representative Nina Azella Milliken, D - Blue Hill
- Representative Steven M. Bishop, R - Bucksport

My name is Mary Allen, and I represent the Town of Surry. I am the Chair of the Select Board. My testimony today is in support of the legislation which you will be considering.

Mainers have purchased, and developed, over [600] properties abutting Toddy Pond and Alamoosook Lake based on the existence of the lake/pond. The development activity ranges from primary residences, to camps, to land—and waterfront—preserved by land trusts. Even the State and Federal governments have invested in Toddy Pond, via recreational boater access facilities and a federal fish hatchery on Alamoosook Lake. If the dams were to be abandoned and the waters released, a substantial portion of the value of these Mainers' investments would disappear, and the abutting towns would lose significant revenue.

Representative of the four towns and both lake associations are here today to describe the efforts we have made to find a solution to preserve the water levels in Toddy Pond and Alamoosook Lake. We will also describe the catastrophic effects that would ensue if the water levels of Toddy Pond and Alamoosook Lake significantly dropped.

The Town of Surry has 145 dwellings on Toddy Pond, both year-round and seasonal. With a drop in water level of eight feet in Toddy Pond the effects would be economically devastating for these residents and for all residents who pay property taxes to the Town. Our Town of 1,700 residents operates on a budget of about \$2.2 M for all non-educational functions. Much of that comes from residential property owners since Surry has only a few businesses. We estimate that overall tax revenue to the Town would decrease by up to \$400,000 because of a loss in value of the properties on Toddy Pond. This deficit would thus be borne by all residents of Surry.

Our four towns have spent nearly \$10,000 on legal fees to date. Our attorney helps us navigate our options and interpret the voluminous data we recently obtained from the current owner of the dams, Bucksport Mill LLC. None of our towns has budgeted for what we have paid and expect to pay for legal representation concerning the abandonment process. As a result, we started a fund-raising campaign asking our residents to donate funds for this purpose.

You will hear shortly about the quasi-municipal entities that would be formed by this legislation. This is the only structure we have identified to assume ownership of the dams—which are too expensive to operate for a small town like Orland and whose continued operation is too important to leave to the hope of grant and donation funding to cover those costs.

I urge you all to seriously consider supporting this legislation. Thank you for your time.