

**Testimony in Support of
LD 531 – An Act Regarding Dam Ownership**

*D. Scott Miller, Blue Hill Select Board Member
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Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Scott Miller, and I am a member of the Blue Hill Select Board. I am here to speak on behalf of LD 531.

Blue Hill has roughly 35 parcels abutting Toddy Pond. While our town's frontage on the pond is modest, our Select Board feels strongly that we should support both these waterfront property owners, our own taxpayers, and the neighboring towns of Orland, Penobscot, and Surry by supporting the establishment of the two quasi-municipal watershed districts via this legislation. On behalf of our Select Board and residents, I have taken an active role in creating the proposed district structures.

Balance of Board/Governance. The proposed board and governance structures try to balance the interests of the towns providing financial support to the districts with those of the waterfront property owners most affected by the existence of, and investments in, the dams.

Cost-sharing Template And the cost-sharing template also provides a basis for both the towns and the property owners to contribute to future operating and capital costs, without obligating all of the town's taxpayers—including those who do not have waterfront property—to contribute theoretically unlimited amounts in perpetuity. A town's residents can opt out of the municipal contribution, if that is what they want, via a vote at Town Meeting.

Assessment authority and eminent domain. Perhaps most importantly, this legislation provides two things that we cannot replicate without it:

- a stable structure for ownership of each dam, with a reasonably assured source of revenues into the foreseeable future; and
- the ability, if necessary, to use eminent domain to acquire the necessary assets to ensure continued operation and maintenance of the dam.

No State funding obligation. And it comes at no cost to the State of Maine—all costs of ownership (net of any grant proceeds or similar revenues) will be borne by the local towns, if their residents choose to appropriate funds, and by the waterfront property owners.

I would like to thank Representatives Milliken and Bishop for their support in drafting and introducing this legislation of importance to our four towns. And to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.