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Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Hon. Denise Tepler, Senate Chair
Hon. Victoria W. Doudera, House Chair
Committee members

Esteemed legislators:

My name is George Schelling. I have lived in Orland for over 50 years. My family first moved to the area in 1750.

I am here in support of LD 531, to give you the perspective of someone who doesn't live on the ponds or even within the Narramissic River watershed.

I am here because these ponds are crucial to the identity of the area, crucial to recreation, crucial to the ecosystem and crucial to economics. They are here for all of us. They are not an exclusive enclave of wealthy people from away. Instead, we all use the ponds. That's why, when public hearings have been held on the problems we face, the meetings have been packed.

My own family has used the ponds for skating, swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, and even sailing. We have picnicked on the shores and attended functions at private homes and at a lakeside inn.

When friends come to visit, we take them to the ponds and if we don't have space in our home, they find lodging on the ponds.

Lakefront properties are extremely important to Orland's tax base. If the dams were gone, many properties would be on mudflats, the property values would plummet and the burden of the municipal budget would be shifted to others, including several of my neighbors, who I know are already living at the margins.

Particularly with extreme weather events, the threat of dam failure is real and frightening. Dam failure could lead to emptying the ponds and catastrophic flooding downstream, including through Orland village. That's why, when the organizers of these efforts asked for contributions, I immediately wrote a check.

I have read the bill carefully. I believe it fairly represents everyone's interests, including my own.

This bill is a bold, innovative undertaking. It may take significant effort on your part to get it into a form you find satisfactory. But I urge you, in behalf of the residents of these towns, to take the time and do the work needed. As indicated in the bill's preamble, this is indeed an emergency situation for these towns.

I visited my neighbor's place the other day. The dam on his farm pond was blown out this winter by extreme weather, exposing two lonely streams, running through the mud. It was a terribly barren and forlorn sight. Please don't let that happen to Alamoosook Lake and Toddy Ponds.