



*Town of Orland  
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## LD 62 An Act to Support Municipal and County Actions on Dam Ownership

Sponsored by:

- Representative Nina Azella Milliken, D - Blue Hill

Committee: Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

### **In Favor of the Bill**

My name is Gina Bushong. I am here today representing the Town of Orland, where I serve on the Select Board. In that capacity, I wish to strongly endorse the passage of LD 62.

The 5 towns in our region, Orland, Bucksport, Penobscot, Blue Hill, and Surry, have been involved in Bucksport Mill LLC's (BuckMill) application to the Department of Environmental Protection for Release From Dam Ownership and Water Level Maintenance (38 MRSA §901-909) for nearly a year.

This statute from 1995 certainly did not envision a firm whose parent company is a multi-billion dollar international private firm seeking to dump three aging high-hazard dams on very small rural communities. In our particular case, BuckMill, the current owner of the Toddy Pond, Alamoosook Lake, and Silver Lake dams, has been less than cooperative in addressing this situation. We have been hampered by the lack of complete and timely responses to our information requests as part of due diligence in considering taking ownership of the dams. The timelines in the current statute have also placed nearly unworkable roadblocks to evaluating our options and giving our citizens the information they need to make the final decision on ownership.

These 3 lakes are critical to our region not only for the recreational and environmental benefits they provide but also because of the economic value to the communities in terms of business activities and property tax revenues. In the case of Silver Lake, it also provides the town of Bucksport's drinking water and supplies an electricity generation facility. Thus these dams are essential to the region and must be preserved.

LD 62 provides a good first step in remedying some of the deficiencies in the current statute. The requirement to provide the information a potential owner needs to facilitate decision-making is essential. The extension and clarification on holding an initial public meeting is also extremely helpful. I urge the Committee to support this bill.

Since the abandonment process contained in this statute has never been utilized by a dam owner, our communities are the first ones to navigate these procedures. In such a complex process, I can assure you that other changes will be necessary. Once the statute has been tested, I strongly recommend that the legislature take a comprehensive approach to revising the entire statute.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gina Bushong". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed contact information.

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