



**Testimony of the Atlantic Salmon Federation and  
Maine Council of the Atlantic Salmon Federation on**

**LD 212: An Act to Require the Valuation of Energy Produced by Hydropower Dams and  
Exploration of Alternative Ownership Options Before They Are Removed**

**April 7, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is John Burrows, I live in Kennebunk, and I am the Vice President for U.S. Operations for the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), an international non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon and their environment. Today, I am speaking on behalf of both ASF and the Maine Council of ASF, which is comprised of a dozen angling, conservation, education, and watershed organizations located across Maine, representing more than 2,500 members and volunteers.

We are providing testimony today in opposition to LD 212, An Act to Require the Valuation of Energy Produced by Hydropower Dams and Exploration of Alternative Ownership Options Before They Are Removed.

We have worked on a number of small dam removal projects across the State dating back to the 1990s. While a few of these dams were large dams on the mainstem of big rivers (e.g., the removal of the Veazie and Great Works Dams as part of the Penobscot River Restoration Project), the vast majority were small, dilapidated old mill dams, log drive dams, and occasionally old hydroelectric dams. All these dams had long since outlived any economic usefulness and all were significant liabilities to their owners, which included private citizens, municipalities, and private businesses. Each of the dams we have removed had negative environmental impacts on fisheries, wildlife, and water quality, and posed risks to public safety due to the decrepit nature of the structures themselves and to exacerbating flooding.

Attached are pictures of three small dams on the Sabattus River that we have removed in recent years. These projects were all done working closely with the Towns of Sabattus and Lisbon and with state and federal natural resource agencies. Each of these dams at one time produced mechanical power - would these dams been subject to the requirements of this legislation? To require a dam owner to conduct a valuation of the energy that *might* be produced by one of these dams or to require a dam owner to find an alternative owner of a site that is a liability simply strikes us as improper.

The Mill Remnants Dam and the Upper Town Dam were owned by the Towns of Sabattus and Lisbon, respectively, and were located adjacent to current and future town parks; why would we compel towns (or anyone) to sell their own property? In addition, the removal of the Upper Town Dam significantly lowered the level of the 100-year flood, allowing local business and homeowners to save significant money with respect to flood insurance premiums.

The third dam, at Mill Street in Lisbon, had been part of an industrial waste site and the right to remove the dam was acquired by the State as part of a bankruptcy proceeding. We were then able to work with the State to remediate mercury in the Sabattus River located upstream of the dam and then restore the site to

its natural condition, allowing river herring to be able to pass upstream, which has been a State goal since the early 1980s. Who would want to own this structure and why would it make sense to study the economic value of potential power at such a site?

More typically than not, these are the types of dams that are being removed in Maine. Yes, some larger hydroelectric dams have been removed – for environmental and public safety reasons – and more may be removed, but getting approval to do so is an extremely long, arduous, and complicated process with substantial opportunity for public participation. And I can tell you, when a dam owner approaches us to ask them to help remove their dam, it is only after they have already exhausted all other opportunities for the site. There is no economic value at any of these dams, but there are real liabilities associated with owning them and their removal eliminates those concerns and often allows for creation of new parks and public spaces, access points to the river for recreation, improvements in water quality, and creation or enhancement of recreational and commercial fisheries.

LD 212 would create an unnecessary burden on dam owners that no other landowner or business is subject to, and it would add additional cost and uncertainty to the permitting process for the removal of dilapidated structures that are causing real environmental and public safety harm. We strongly urge the committee to vote ought not to pass.

Sincerely,

John R.J. Burrows  
Vice President, U.S. Operations  
Atlantic Salmon Federation

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