



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

**LD 430: An Act to Impose Moratoria on Hydropower Dam Removal and on Water Release from
Nonhydropower Dams and to Make Other Changes to the Laws Regulating Such Dams**

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 430, An Act to Impose Moratoria on Hydropower Dam Removal and on Water Release from Nonhydropower Dams and to Make Other Changes to the Laws Regulating Such Dams.

There is no dam removal emergency and no need for a moratorium. In fact, establishing such a moratorium would prevent the removal of a number of dams that pose public safety risks and where the dam owner, fish and wildlife agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities are working in collaboration to remove obsolete dams. We cannot think of a valid reason to prevent the removal of such dams.

One example is the pending removal of a dam owned by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) in Chesterville. The dam is in incredibly poor condition and is failing to maintain water levels for wading birds and waterfowl in the Chesterville Wildlife Management Area, which is the main reason MDIFW acquired the dam in the 1950s. The dam is also a barrier to fish passage for resident freshwater and sea-run fish species. We have been working with MDIFW, other state and federal agencies, and the local community to develop plans to remove the dam and to construct a small boulder riffle a few hundred meters upstream of the dam to enhance aquatic habitat and wetlands. As part of this project, we are also working with the town to repair or install a number of dry hydrants in various locations for fire protection. The project is in the pre-permitting stage, and we have been planning to issue bids for construction this fall for summer 2026 construction.

The removal of old dams – be they former or current producers of hydropower or non-hydropower – is a reasonable and legitimate activity that eliminates obsolete structures and directly leads to myriad environmental and social benefits. These include restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife populations, improvements in water quality, new opportunities for recreation, reduced flooding, improved public safety, and the creation of new parks and trails for local communities.

ASF and MCASF member organizations have been involved in more than twenty small dam removal projects since the late 1990s. Each and every one of these projects was done in cooperation and collaboration with the dam owner, local communities, state, tribal and federal agencies, and other non-governmental organizations.

In addition to the extensive local, state, and federal permitting required for these projects, a number of them also required us to obtain local approval by either town selectboards or via a town-wide referendum.

A number of these projects involved removal of former hydropower dams and these structures had long since outlived any economic purpose. The dams were all in poor condition and were significant liabilities to the owner. Many of the dams also had inadequate fish passage or lacked fish passage altogether.

Many of our dam removal projects also included or improved new parks, public access, repair or replacement of public infrastructure, and installation of new dry hydrants for fire protection. The benefits to the environment and local communities of each of these projects have been far greater than any benefits provided by the crumbling old dams that were removed.

A dam removal moratorium would prevent good projects like these from happening, and we fail to see how that would be in the public interest. We strongly encourage the committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 430.

Sincerely,

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

Fort Andross, Suite 202A
14 Maine Street
Brunswick, ME 04011