

April 14, 2025

From: Eric Ward, Greenville Jct. ME
To: Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

RE Testimony in support of LD 1548 - An Act to Prevent the Introduction or Transfer of Invasive Fish Species in Inland Waters of the State

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Please find this testimony in support of LD 1548.

My name is Eric Ward, a former Piscataquis County Commissioner and Registered Maine Guide. I am lifelong resident of Greenville Junction, where I was born, raised, educated, and have spent time working, volunteering, and enjoying the outdoors in Maine's North Woods—a place that has shaped who I am in every way.

I have witnessed firsthand the harmful impact invasive fish species have had on Maine's native brook trout.

The introduction of invasive fish isn't new in Maine. Several years ago, one person introduced bass into Moosehead Lake from Sebec Lake. Unfortunately, another introduction in the Jackman area has bass spread down the Moose River Drainage. This jeopardizes forage fish, spawning areas and traditional habitats.

In the Saint John River drainage of northern Maine, muskellunge have become established—and more recently, northern pike. Areas once known for excellent native brook trout fishing have been severely impacted. Northern Pike have also been confirmed in sections of the Penobscot River drainage. It's clear that native fish are under pressure from every direction, and it only takes one careless act—one person or camp owner moving an invasive species—to set a chain reaction in motion.

Here is an example of how the process goes. Mature Brook Trout can lay 2,500 eggs, Bass 3,000 – 80,000 and Pike 20,000 – 200,000 plus. Native cold-water fish can't compete with invasive fish.

Despite ongoing public education and existing laws, the spread of invasive species continues. This suggests our current approach isn't working. While LD 1548 may not go far enough, it represents a step in the right direction. With the help of this committee, it can become an effective tool for enforcement and deterrence.

To illustrate the imbalance in public awareness: if someone illegally killed a moose and left it beside I-95, it would likely make the news. But when someone illegally introduces an invasive species into a native fishery, it often goes unnoticed—until it's too late and the damage is done.

Let's change this. Get aggressive and say no more. We have some of the best native brook trout fishing in the country. Isn't it time for them to be more of a priority? I urge you to act. **When the last native brook trout water in the state has bass or some other invasive in it, will the statement be, I guess we should have done more?**