

## COBBOSSEE WATERSHED DISTRICT

SANDRA SMALL-HUGHES  
Chairperson

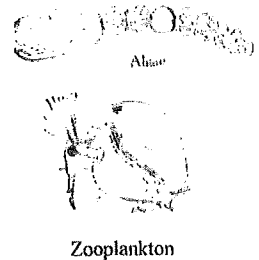
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*Maine's first regional lake management district*



### COBBOSSEE WATERSHED DISTRICT TESTIMONY 4/30/25 IN SUPPORT OF LD 1763: **An Act to Regulate Nonwater-dependent Floating Structures on Maine Waters**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Good Afternoon:

My name is Wendy Dennis. I am here as a limnologist testifying on behalf of the Cobbossee Watershed District in **SUPPORT** of LD 1763. Thank you for this opportunity. The Cobbossee Watershed District, or CWD, is a special-purpose district authorized by the Maine Legislature in 1971 to protect, improve and conserve the 28 lakes & ponds within the "Cobbossee Watershed". The municipalities with lake shorefront in the watershed provide our primary funding. Those municipalities' economies greatly depend on the lakes for both property tax and tourism revenue.

The CWD's primary focus is protecting and improving water quality of those inland waters and our comments regarding LD1763 are therefore primarily related to water quality and the likelihood that this bill will prevent negative water quality impacts that could occur with a continuation of, and a foreseeable expansion of, the use of nonwater-dependent floating structures.

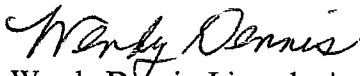
Preventing discharge of sewage, intentional or accidental, into lake waters is the most important reason for CWD to support this bill. Our work to restore polluted Annabessacook Lake and Cobbossee Lake began in the 1970's with a collaboration with the DEP on eliminating the point discharge of municipal and industrial sewage directly into Annabessacook Lake, which flows into Cobbossee Lake. That major accomplishment was followed by evaluating private sewage disposal systems on all lake front property in the watershed and educating property owners about proper maintenance, system inadequacies, and reports to local plumbing inspections on violations. Many improvements have been made to private sewage disposal systems and that has reduced the chemical and biological pollution of the lakes. Due to this and other efforts, the water quality has improved in both lakes and one of them, Cobbossee Lake, has been removed from DEP's list of impaired lakes. It remains an ongoing task however to promote and ensure adequate private sewage system treatment. It is totally unacceptable to risk direct sewage contamination in our lakes from a structure situated upon the water.

There is one nonwater-dependent structure on Annabessacook Lake that does not appear to pose a threat at this time as it is meticulously maintained by a highly knowledgeable and environmentally committed owner, with appropriate sewage disposal facilities properly designed and located on the adjacent land. It may be an appropriate candidate for grandfathering. However, CWD does not support any further proliferation of nonwater-dependent floating structures on Annabessacook Lake or any lake. There is too much risk of non-compliance with proper sewage disposal. There is too great a risk of accidents. Earlier this week a lakeshore resident notified me that his properly installed sewage system had malfunctioned that morning due to a pump failure. He shut the system down and called repair services immediately, but a small amount of effluent had discharged onto the ground. None had reached the pond. Discharge to the pond was prevented only because the

property owner discovered the problem immediately and took proper steps, and because there was land between the system and the water to absorb the short-lived discharge. Sewage facilities directly over the water have no such barrier. The point is that accidents can and do happen. A more bizarre example from a few years ago was on another pond in the CWD where the owner of an island property used a port-a-potty for sewage disposal. The port-a-potty, however, was located on a dock over the water, next to shore. I didn't know about this illegal situation until I was notified by another pond resident that the dock had broken loose in high winds and was listing and being blown around the pond with the port-a-potty at an angle and in danger of toppling into the pond. Anything can happen with sewage over or near the water. This problem should be strongly addressed on allowed uses such as houseboats as well.

There are other water quality reasons to support the prohibition of nonwater-dependent floating structures, such as the impact on nearshore habitat for aquatic plants and organisms. The four State agencies have studied many issues related to these structures. It is complex. However, they have issued reports such that we have reason to support the key recommendations from the 2023 Floating Structure Report which has materialized as this proposed legislation.

The CWD supports LD1763. Thank you.



Wendy Dennis, Limnologist

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