



*Town of Orland  
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## LD 1848 An Act to Implement Recommendations for Improved Dam Safety

### Sponsored by:

- Representative Nina Azella Milliken, D - Blue Hill
- Senator David G. Haggan, R - Penobscot
- Representative Arthur Bell D - Yarmouth,
- Senator Nicole Grohoski, D - Hancock
- Representative Steven M. Bishop, R - Bucksport

Committee On Criminal Justice and Public Safety

### **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 1848.

The 4 towns in our region, Orland, 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. The dams involved in this action are the Alamoosook Lake and Toddy Pond dams. Both are classified as high-hazard by MEMA.

These dams form 2 lakes which 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. Thus, these dams are essential to the region and must be preserved.

Our State legislators, along with the four towns and the two lake associations, have spent an enormous amount of time, energy, and money to develop a

legislative solution creating a quasi-municipal authority to own and manage the dams. Both dams are old and in need of repair. BuckMill, the owner for the last 10 years, has invested as little as possible in their upkeep. So, as new owners, we will be faced with significant work to address the deferred maintenance of these dams. MEMA, in fact, just recently visited the Toddy Pond dam in response to citizen concerns about its condition.

If this bill is enacted, our communities feel we will benefit from the additional staff resources dedicated to inspection and enhanced technical expertise. While the bill emphasizes stricter oversight of dam maintenance, we applaud the emphasis on supporting voluntary compliance rather than punitive actions. The stakeholder engagement provision of the bill also sets a welcome tone of collaboration between the agency and dam owners.

As we move to become dam owners in the near future, we certainly want to work in partnership with MEMA to develop and accomplish our long-term goal to keep these high-hazard dams safe and in good repair while assessing options for upgrades that would be more environmentally friendly as well and reduce the long-term maintenance costs. In fact, this bill, coupled with LD 1382, An Act Regarding Dam Repair, heard in your committee last week, would put our communities in a much stronger position as we move forward.

I urge the committee to support LD 1848

Respectively submitted,

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