

**Testimony to support LD 2141, ENR Committee**

February 4, 2026

Paul Cain, President, Thompson Lake Environmental Association

Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee for Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Paul Cain, I live in Oxford, and I represent the Thompson Lake Environmental Association (TLEA). TLEA strongly supports LD 2141, which would direct funds from unclaimed bottle deposits towards lake restoration and protection.

Thompson Lake is a 4,400-acre lake bordered by the towns of Casco, Otisfield, Poland and Oxford. The lake is a major driver of the local economy supporting businesses such as marinas, boat yards, restaurants, building and maintenance contractors, and rental units. The lake has 4 public boat launches and ample recreational opportunities for the public. On any given day in the summer, the lake will be busy with residents and visitors boating, swimming, fishing or just enjoying the spectacular views from the shorelines.

TLEA goal is to protect the natural beauty, water quality and biologic diversity of the lake. We have over 500 members and our programs include invasive species mitigation, a courtesy boat inspection service, a 319 Grant program for erosion control, a Youth Conservation Corps, water quality monitoring and educational outreach programs. Over the past decade we have eliminated 600 tons of milfoil from the lake. All these programs rely on funds from membership dues, donations and grants.

As an example, of how tenuous this funding can be, in 2023 we organized a watershed survey of the lake encompassing a 35 square mile area. We identified 299 erosion sites that were contributing to phosphorus runoff and algae growth. This allowed us to work with the Maine DEP to obtain a 319 federal Grant to address these sites this past year. We used the matching funds from this grant for 3 major erosion site projects, multiple Residential Matching Grants for smaller erosion projects, and to support our Youth Conservation Corps. We were recently informed that because of federal cuts, the Maine DEP is suspending the 319 grant program. We will not be able to continue this essential work without additional funding. LD 2141 could rectify this.

One of the reasons Maine is such a great place to live in or visit is the beauty of our lakes. LD 2141 could provide sustainability for programs that protect these natural resources. Thank you for this opportunity.