

Testimony in Support of LD 2141- An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund

Jennifer Jespersen, Ecological Instincts
February 4, 2026



Good afternoon Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Jennifer Jespersen, and I am the Principal and Senior Scientist at Ecological Instincts, a small Maine-based environmental consulting firm that specializes in lake and watershed planning and restoration. I am a Certified Lake Manager through the North American Lake Management Society, past President of Maine Lakes, and current member of the Maine Lakes Advisory Board. I have spent the last two decades helping communities understand lakes and how to protect them. I am here today to express my support for LD 2141.

Maine is known for its high-quality lakes, but many are facing growing water quality challenges. These challenges are complex and unique to each lake. I've provided a handout with a list of active watershed management plans we've helped develop for both impaired and threatened lakes. These plans span a 10-year period and outline strategies and costs needed to protect threatened lakes or to restore impaired lakes. Of the dozen lake watershed plans listed, the estimated cost is close to \$30 million dollars to implement. This is by no means the full list of active plans across the state, and likely just a fraction of the total cost needs to protect our lakes.

Lakes such as China Lake, Sebasticook Lake, and Unity Pond have experienced long-term phosphorus loading from their watersheds, resulting in legacy phosphorus stored in bottom sediments. In these cases, effective restoration often requires high-cost in-lake treatments, such as aluminum-based phosphorus inactivation that cost hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars to undertake.

Across Maine, the most persistent obstacle to progress in lake protection and restoration is NOT the lack of engaged citizens. The greatest barrier is that available funding does not match the scale or cost of the problem. The current funding mechanism in Maine is highly competitive, spread too thin, and insufficient to meet the current needs of our lakes. As a result, communities with well-documented water quality problems and ready-to-implement projects are often unable to move from planning to action on a scale that is needed to make a difference, and so water quality continues to decline.

The responsibility of stewarding Maine's lakes rests with us. LD 2141 will help us move from a reactive funding approach to a proactive approach by providing a stable source of funding dedicated to the long-term protection and ongoing restoration of our valuable shared public resource (lakes) by directing a portion of unclaimed beverage container deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund. This approach reinvests funds already meant for the protection of Maine's environment into action-oriented lake protection and restoration programming. I urge you to support LD 2141 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

List of Active Watershed-Based Management Plans/Protection Plans

Lake	Town(s)	County	Plan Type	Years	Estimated Cost
Abrams Pond	Eastbrook/Franklin	Hancock	Management Plan	2026-2035	\$ 1,440,150
Sebasticook Lake	Newport	Penobscot	Management Plan	2025-2034	\$ 3,451,550
Wilson Lake	Wilton	Franklin	Protection Plan	2025-2034	\$ 508,250
Beech Hill Pond	Otis	Hancock	Protection Plan	2024-2033	\$ 678,750
North Pond	Rome, Mercer, Smithfield	Kennebec/Somerset	Management Plan	2024-2033	\$ 3,172,500
Unity Pond	Unity, Burnham, Troy	Waldo	Management Plan	2023-2032	\$ 2,464,250
China Lake	China, Vassalboro	Kennebec	Management Plan	2022-2032	\$ 3,161,750
Long Pond	Belgrade, Mount Vernon, Rome	Kennebec	Management Plan	2022-2032	\$ 1,656,700
Cross Lake	Cross Lake Twp/ Square Lake Twp	Aroostook	Management Plan	2021-2031	\$ 8,744,362
Togus Pond	Augusta	Kennebec	Management Plan	2021-2031	\$ 1,734,565
Great Pond	Belgrade/Rome	Kennebec	Management Plan	2021-2031	\$ 1,977,660
Georges Pond	Franklin	Hancock	Management Plan	2020-2029	\$ 725,965
					\$ 29,716,452



Prepared by Jennifer Jespersen, Ecological Instincts

February 4, 2026 in support of L.D. 2141

The list above does not represent all watershed plans statewide, but a select list of recent, active plans prepared by Ecological Instincts

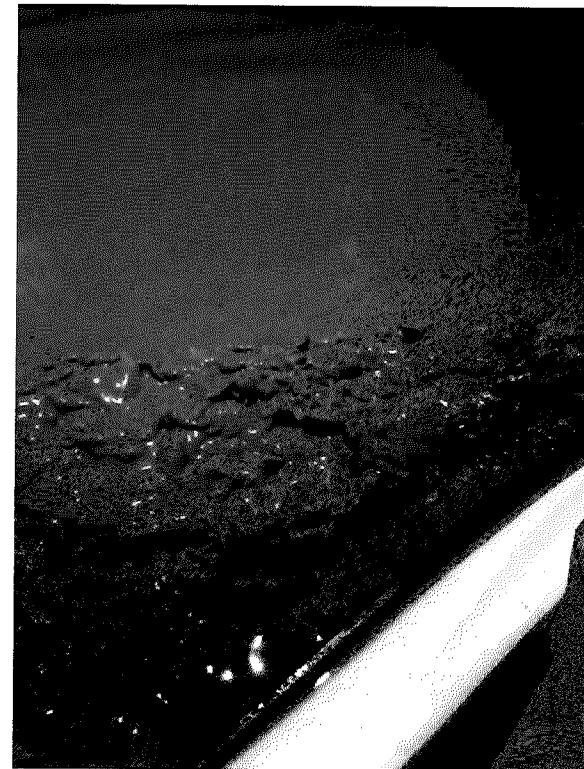
Photos of Nuisance Algal Blooms in Maine Lakes with Active Watershed-Based Management Plans*



Lake Winnecook, Unity



North Pond, Smithfield



Georges Pond, Franklin



Cross Lake, Cross Lake Twp



Togus Pond, Augusta



Sebasticook Lake, Newport

**Sebasticook Lake during the annual fall drawdown to flush phosphorus and algae out of the lake.*