

May 3, 2021

To the Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Testimony in support of LD 676

About this time of year in 1991, a colleague of mine from Massachusetts visited me at my office by the river in downtown Auburn. At the end of the visit, as I showed him around outside, he remarked "This place stinks! How can you stand to work here?"

I was a bit taken aback and discouraged by his remark. In the face of opposition from the governor's office and the paper industry, the legislature had finally enacted a statute to control color, odor and foam two years earlier. Things were beginning to look up. Couldn't he see the possibilities?

No, he could not. And that chance blunt comment made realize that, however much I might think of the river as LA's greatest natural asset, no one from outside the area was going to agree. We were doomed to be an aging mill town to which no one would give a second glance until the river could be restored to its former prominence before paper mills, textile mills, poultry processing plants, combined storm and sanitary sewers and other sources dumped waste into it.

It is now thirty years later. A long time. And in that time a lot of money and effort by local people, municipalities, industries, landowners, non-profit organizations and state and local agencies has brought the river back. There are canoe races on the river, parks and walks along its shore, dining by the river, and festivals on the banks. Mills have been renovated for businesses and now housing. It is time that the legislature officially recognizes what has been accomplished and lets us celebrate and continue the renewal by designating the LA segment of the river Class B.

And time for me to invite Michael back.

Thank you.

Bonnie Lounsbury

505 West Auburn Rd

Auburn

207-713-3993