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Testimony of Sen. Eloise Vitelli supporting
LD 676, An Act To Reclassify Part of the Androscoggin River to Class B
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
May 3, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Eloise Vitelli, and I represent Senate District 23, which includes all of Sagadahoc County and the Town of Dresden in Lincoln County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 676, “An Act To Reclassify Part of the Androscoggin River to Class B.”

The Androscoggin River holds a prominent position in Maine’s economic and conservation history. The Androscoggin was one of the most polluted rivers in the country, hosting factories and mills that drove economic development at the cost of clean water. In recent decades, the State, local industry, and communities along the River have made significant investments in improving the Androscoggin’s water quality. Today, the River continues to be an economic driver, but is also much safer to recreate on, and does much less harm to the human life, wildlife, and delicate ecosystems that rely on it.

By upgrading the portion of the River in question to Class B, we recognize the great strides we have made in cleaning up the Androscoggin, while committing to maintaining these higher standards for the years to come. People can now walk and fish along the River, enjoy its natural beauty, and operate clean businesses without concerns for their health and safety. The quality of the water in this portion of the river is up to par with a Class B river, and its classification should reflect that – as should regulatory and oversight practices in the future, so that we do not lose the great progress we have made.

I know there are experts and organizations testifying in favor of this bill that have much more experience than I do with the Androscoggin’s water quality over time. I trust their assessment that this part of the River is truly due for an official upgrade. I thank the committee for its consideration of this bill, and I urge you to vote ought to pass.