



**Testimony on L.D. 1979 –  
An Act To Sustain Good-paying Jobs in the Forest Products Industry by Ensuring Consistency  
between Comprehensive River Resource Management Plans and State Water Quality  
Standards**

**OPPOSE  
February 28, 2022**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Jeanne Christie, the President of the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 1979.

The Maine Wilderness Guides Organization consists of over 90 registered Maine guides, sporting camp and lodge owners, and their supporters. Our mission is to provide a unified voice for the profession of wilderness guiding while maintaining the highest professional, educational, and stewardship standards for the conservation of remote woods and waters. We are dedicated to the protection of habitat and natural resources in the areas we guide in for our livelihoods, our clients, the fish and game we pursue, and for future generations.

The health of Maine's rivers and sea-run fish – including the endangered Atlantic salmon – is threatened by dams that block upstream and downstream migration. Federal relicensing provides opportunities to reevaluate the impact of dams, but dam owners are trying to limit the authority of Maine's natural resource agencies to participate fully in this process. The Legislature should not hamstring Maine's resource agencies by preventing them from making science-based recommendations to restore our rivers and fisheries, yet this bill proposes to limit fish restoration efforts.

We are also concerned that this bill would make it more difficult to deal with dams that are not being maintained and need to be removed or modified for safety reasons. In Maine, there are 584 dams in the national inventory. Often, there is not funding to rebuild these dams as they age, and the best decision may be to remove them. LD 1979 would make that more challenging.

While Maine has a lot of outstanding aquatic habitat, our waterways and fish populations are far less robust than they historically once were. Rivers, streams, ponds, and the fish and wildlife that inhabit them face multiple, compounding threats. A major cause of habitat degradation is dams that have decimated native fish populations, including Atlantic salmon, American shad, and river herring. Dams are the major obstacles to restore sea run fish and industries they support, including guiding. If fish populations are not strong, that means lost business opportunities for guides. Healthy, free-flowing rivers do not just benefit fish and fishing guides, they also benefit kayak, hiking, and other wilderness guides because clients want to experience natural resources, such as rivers, in a natural, healthy state.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 1979. Thank you for your time and consideration of our views.