

Testimony on LD 1979

An Act to Sustain Good-paying Jobs in the Forest Products Industry by Ensuring Consistency between Comprehensive River Resources Management Plans and State Water Quality Standards

My name is Tom Hansen. While I've lived in Maine for more than 40 years, my "from away" status can hinder me in certain situations. However, my offset for being from away is that I am from a 'paper-making' family. While I worked only briefly at the "mill," my father, my brother, three uncles and a cousin all retired from that mill. With only one exception, we were all either hunters or fishermen. We enjoyed the outdoors and were sensitive to the environment that played a part in those endeavors.

Papermills require access to water. For years, the water that flowed by the mill was horribly polluted, due in large part to the mill that we as a family depended on for our livelihoods. Eventually, lawsuits were filed, and the mill was forced to come into compliance with the clean water standards established by the Clean Water Act, which Maine's own Senator Edmond Muskie spearheaded. The outcome? No one that I have knowledge of has lost their jobs to a clean environment. No one. My brother, while retired, still meets with many of the men in his former department. He knows of no one who has lost their jobs to the lawsuit that brought about water. On the other hand, the water body no longer has a putrid odor, and has a healthy fishery of wild brown trout. Close to home (i.e., Maine), I know of no jobs lost to clean water requirements or appropriate and safe fish passage on the Penobscot and Kennebec Rivers. If jobs are lost to foreign competition, a clean environment that impacts all Maine citizens is not a fair tradeoff to secure those jobs.

There is also plenty of evidence that improvement in water quality standards and fish passage has led to significant increases in economic, recreational, and environmental benefits to numerous communities and counties across Maine, and especially in the vary areas that papermills operate in many cases. And finally,

I also want to point out that a major investor in this proposed legislation is a Canadian-based conglomerate (Brookfield Renewable) that is concerned about their “bottom line” and not about the citizens and environment of Maine. I can only conclude that an incredibly favorite son of Maine, Ed Muskie, must be turning over in his grave at the thought of this legislation. I urge you to reject this ill-conceived legislation. Thank you. Tom Hansen, 23 Barrett Way, Ellsworth, Maine 04605 Email: rivertherapy@gmail.com