

Kate Kooperman
Portland
LD 1979

My name is Kate Kooperman, I live in Portland. I am an employee of Patagonia, though not speaking on behalf of Patagonia, I am speaking as a private citizen. Prior to working for Patagonia, I was a community social worker for fifteen years.

I grew up in the Finger Lakes of upstate New York, a region of the northeast, like Maine, filled with lakes and flowing water. If you haven't been, I suggest visiting sometime. It's really extraordinary. The area is filled with gorges that were originally carved by water which thawed during the ice age, leaving large caverns. Water flows through these gorges creating beautiful waterfalls which wind down and run into the lakes. I spent my childhood exploring these waterfalls. Every summer growing up, I would find pockets of water in the streams, climb into the flowing water and cool off on a hot day. You can sit on the smooth rock and just let the water flow over you. After a rain storm the gorges fill up with flowing water, refilling the lakes they run into. In the winter, the waterfalls freeze, and as the air warms the ice melts and you can see the force of the water come through.

Moving water has always been a rejuvenating power that I have appreciated in nature. Water that is dammed, has always struck me as stagnant, as if something is off, held back, controlled.

I recently saw a video of salmon here in Maine being taken out of the water and transported by truck around a dam, as they were unable to get through the dam to travel to their natural spawning habitat to reproduce. If salmon are unable to reproduce then their chances of survival are greatly at risk. Since salmon are already endangered, it was particularly jarring to me to see the fish having to be moved out of water, put in to vehicles and driven around a dam. Salmon is a fish that is revered and savored by so many people, it seems we should be doing all we can to ensure their healthy survival.

What surprised me about LD 1979, as I read it, is the ceding of power to the federal government from the hands of Maine state law makers, state resource agencies and Maine people. I am consistently impressed and inspired by the independent nature of Maine people and this bill seems to give away the power of Maine's citizens over our natural resources, rivers, fish and the potential for fish to continue and flourish to a department of the federal government that is responsible for overseeing dams. That does not align with the strong independent Maine culture I am familiar with.

My concern is that this bill is being pushed for to protect the large company, Brookfield Renewable, owners of many dams throughout Maine and would limit the power of our local state agencies to ensure Maine rivers remain healthy and clean. Please do not continue to allow big businesses control over our rivers. This is the time to thoughtfully ensure that Maine will continue to be a leader in outdoor recreation and that Maine citizens retain the ability to manage their own environment. I urge you to oppose LD 1979 and move forward with continuing to protect our natural resources.