



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Jennifer Poirier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

February 28, 2022

Testimony in Support of LD 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

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am Representative Jennifer Poirier and I proudly represent the people of House District 107, which is all of Skowhegan and part of Madison. I am a co-sponsor of LD 1979 because this bill is vital to the economic protection of my community and many other communities throughout Maine.

We all agree that the resources of Maine are invaluable. We all understand the importance of preserving natural resources, including wildlife and habitats. We must learn to come to the table together to balance preservation with the needs of the people of Maine.

LD 1979 does not prevent river and fish restoration projects. The purpose of LD 1979 is to balance preservation with impacts to existing businesses and people of Maine. An existing hydropower project must be considered when making regulatory determinations.

In the community of Skowhegan, removal of dams would be devastating. The town has invested over a million dollars into its water treatment facility. Removal of dams would lower the water levels and improvements would become obsolete. This would not only cost taxpayers more money on improvements, it would also mean digging further into the riverbed to maintain the appropriate flow needed to sustain the water demand.



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Similar situations would happen at Sappi. Lower water levels cause current pumping systems to be inoperable. The costs of new pumps and the effects on the river to place them at lower levels could be enough to close the mill.

There are many businesses in Skowhegan that rely on the river and tourism. Whether having an ice cream at the Island Dairy Treat, enjoying lunch on the deck of the Old Mill Pub overlooking the river or awaiting the Run of River project that is sure to bring much tourism to the community, the river is a huge part of it all.

The economic impact of business closures and the burden of tax dollars having to pay for further upgrades will be too much for the community to handle. The economic strains our country is already facing are enough. LD 1979 can lessen the burden and ensure a proper seat at the table.

When existing hydropower projects are considered, we can work on solutions that are good for the environment, the fish AND the people. Restorative measures do not have to be extreme measures and deserve to have oversight.

I urge each of you to vote in favor of protecting jobs, communities and the environment by passing LD 1979. It does not have to be one or the other. We must work together to find the balance.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Poirier".

Jennifer Poirier
House District #107