

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 Ralph Tucker and Distinguished Members of the Natural Resources Committee

**I am writing in opposition to LD 1979.** Having been long engaged with river restoration on the Presumpscot River this bill is an extreme concern. If LD 1979 had been in place it may be questionable if the many environmental gains on the Presumpscot could have ever occurred. If it is to be enacted hence forth, it is a strong concern that this restoration may be greatly hampered.

While a management plan in itself is not a bad idea, to have such legislation so biased toward the hydro industry as this is should be unacceptable. Even the title describes the rivers as “resources” construing human use. Responsibly undertaken human use can certainly be a part of the balance. However, a river is first and foremost not a resource for our use but an ecological system that lives, breathes and upon which we all depend.

While LD 1979 states in its title it is “To Sustain Good Paying Jobs in the Forest Products Industry” no such referencing jobs can be found in it nor is it applicable to forest products. Even in the summary the only industry it refers to is the hydropower industry.

What it does state is that any resource management plan “must at a minimum include as applicable” a collection of items such as recreation, aquatic habitat, fish passage, water levels and flows. It then goes on to state with a more strident emphasis that it “Must give consideration to existing uses”. As stated in the summary this “use” is Hydro. I would suggest that the migration path and spawning of fish is a far longer and more profoundly important “use” than is hydro. While hydro may certainly exist it should not exist at the expense of the aquatic use of the river that sustains our ocean fisheries, creates mammalian and bird habitat, is historically used by our indigenous communities, and provides an abundance of recreational value.

Maine is a state that is identified with, and thrives on, nature and particularly its many rivers and water bodies. LD 1979 Would disallow Maine’s DEP capacity for regulatory standards and that do not first conform to the limits of FERC. Maine is extraordinarily different from most other states in 1.) that it prides itself on an abundance of fresh water bodies; 2.) that it has been a leader in efforts toward the restoration and conservation of those water bodies; 3.) that it knows the quality of its waters have a profound bearing on our state’s quality of life. Maine can take pride in its waterways because it has the capacity to go above and beyond. This bill in its current form would greatly limit that capacity. This is not a direction we want our state to go in the protection of its water ways I respectfully request that you vote against LD 1979.

Michael Shaughnessy