

Testimony in Support of:

**LD 164, Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund
Submitted to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
January 30, 2023**



Dear Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Jennifer Jespersen, and I am the owner of Ecological Instincts, a small, Maine-based, woman-owned consulting firm located in Manchester. My firm works with municipalities, lake associations, and state agencies including the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to help protect and improve water quality in lakes across the state. We currently have projects as far north as Cross Lake on the Maine/Canada border, south to Crystal Lake in Gray. Some of our current projects include: Togus Pond (Augusta), China Lake (China/Vassalboro), Georges Pond (Franklin), Sabbathday Lake (New Gloucester), North Pond (Smithfield), Quimby Pond (Rangeley), Abrams Pond (Eastbrook), Unity Pond (Unity), and Varnum Pond (Wilton/Temple).

I am writing today to urge your support for LD 164: An Act to Fund the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund. Never has there been a better opportunity to invest in lake restoration. I began my career in Maine almost 20 years ago assisting the Maine DEP with assessment of the 30 most polluted lakes in Maine. Today, there are still 21 lakes on the "Impaired Lakes Priority List", and an additional 170 on the "Threatened Lakes Priority List". There are hundreds more that would benefit from funding to protect the watersheds around them from the effects of development, and climate change.

According to the Maine Climate Council, surface water temperatures in northern New England increased 1.4 °F per decade from 1984-2014, which is faster than the worldwide average, with Maine lakes warming on average by nearly 5.5 °F during this time. Higher (air and water) temperatures lead to earlier ice-out and later ice-in, resulting in longer and stronger stratification periods, which leads to increased algal growth, greater oxygen demand due to decomposition on the lake bottom, and lower oxygen near the lake bottom. Other climate-related impacts including more intense precipitation events and drought, both can have detrimental effects on our lakes.

Voluntary lake protection and restoration has been the primary mode of lake protection in Maine. Unfortunately, there are not enough resources to go around to support only voluntary efforts. Towns across the state are already struggling to fix roads and keep their schools running, lake associations volunteers are burning out trying to bolster support of lakes on shoestring budgets, and DEP's Lake Assessment Section is grossly understaffed. Meanwhile, our lakes are showing signs of stress, and others are experiencing algal blooms. LD 164 will make Maine a regional leader for lake protection and provide a mechanism for restoring our impaired lakes and providing better protection for our threatened and high-quality lakes and ponds.

As a small business owner representing Maine towns and lake associations, a Maine native, a volunteer water quality monitor, and parent of two young children who spend time playing in and on our local lakes, I ask you to please support LD 164- to help ensure clean water for all Maine people, and for all future generations of Mainers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Jespersen".

Jennifer Jespersen
Ecological Instincts