

Bonnie Lounsbury  
Auburn  
LD 1473

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1473, An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources for Public Benefit

To: Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee

Good afternoon.

I am Bonnie Lounsbury, writing in support of L.D. 1473. I live in Auburn.

Water has been called the oil of the 21st century- a precious and finite resource essential for life and economic growth. Maine's largest communities- Portland, Lewiston-Auburn and Bangor-- are extraordinarily fortunate to have that oil--lakes that supply drinking water without the need for a prohibitively expensive filtration plant.

Those water supplies are under threat from a variety of sources. One is development of residential structures. Development increases the amount of runoff to lakes and that runoff contains phosphorus and nitrogen that feed algal growth. Too much phosphorus and nitrogen and even the cleanest drinking water source can be choked with algae that preclude its use as a water supply without filtration. (If algae become persistent and pervasive, even a filtration plant will ultimately fail). Towns in the watersheds of lakes that provide drinking water without filtration must be able to control land uses in order to protect the drinking water supply and keep the water rates low.

LD 1473 addresses one barrier to that essential control. It allows towns to prohibit accessory dwellings on residential lots in the watershed. Towns can still zone for residential use if they choose to do so, but are not forced under state law to allow additional dwellings on those lots. Watershed land is not land necessary for construction of additional housing. It is land that is essential for protection of water supplies that keep housing affordable.

L.D. 1473 alone will not protect our drinking water sources. Many more local actions are critical, actions like increasing forest cover and preventing erosion. But it is one step that the state can take to give towns the flexibility they need.

I urge you to vote to pass L.D. 1473.

Thank you.

Bonnie Lounsbury