

February 25, 2021

Dear Senator Dill, Representative Landry and Distinguished IF&W Committee Members,

My name is Kim Lajoie and I live in Standish. I am testifying in support of the bill before you LD 394: An Act to Protect Maine's Loons and Other Wildlife in the Issuance of a Permit to Hold a Regatta, Race, Boat or Water-Ski Exhibition.

My family and I live on Watchic Lake and are avid boaters and water skiers. We enjoy all there is to living on the lake including the amazing experience of observing the local loons who live there. Both males and females participate in raising the chicks to include joint sitting on the nest, feeding, protecting and teaching. They are sophisticated in their communication calls, their ability to track predators, defend a territory and live long lives. They know almost to the day when "ice out" occurs and are back on the lake to stake old territories or fight for new ones. There is a common belief that we know only a fraction of their intelligence, their habits and their capabilities, they are one of the most iconic symbols that the state of Maine has.

It was therefore, disturbing to learn that there are no provisions for protection for the loons or other wildlife during these high speed boat races. I have personally seen these boats racing 4-5 abreast, going 70 MPH for three days in a row. Because loons have heavy bodies and solid bones which allow them to dive for fish they need to run across the water to gain enough momentum for flight. They are not like other waterfowl whose bones are hollow and can "take off" at a moments notice. Their only tool to avoid a boat is to dive. If the boat is going too fast, they are vulnerable to be struck then or when they "pop up" down/up lake. The loons have no way to avoid a boat travelling at these speeds especially when they are 4-5 in a row. The chicks are even more susceptible as they are very shallow divers when they are young. There is no way for loons to avoid collisions under these circumstances. Boat strikes are becoming the leading cause of reported death for loons in the state – only behind lead fishing tackle.

I am not an anti-recreational boater, as stated above my family and I enjoy many hours on the lake. I am also not an anti boat racer, and especially not anti regatta (which is basically a crew race), or water-ski exhibition. Those exhibitions usually include one boat at a time travelling 20-30 mph. I am for the ability of the IF&W Commissioner to deny a permit to protect loons, other wildlife and water quality from these high speed races when it is appropriate.

Please vote to support LD 394. Give our Magical Loons and other wildlife a Voice of Protection.

Sincerely,

Kim Lajoie